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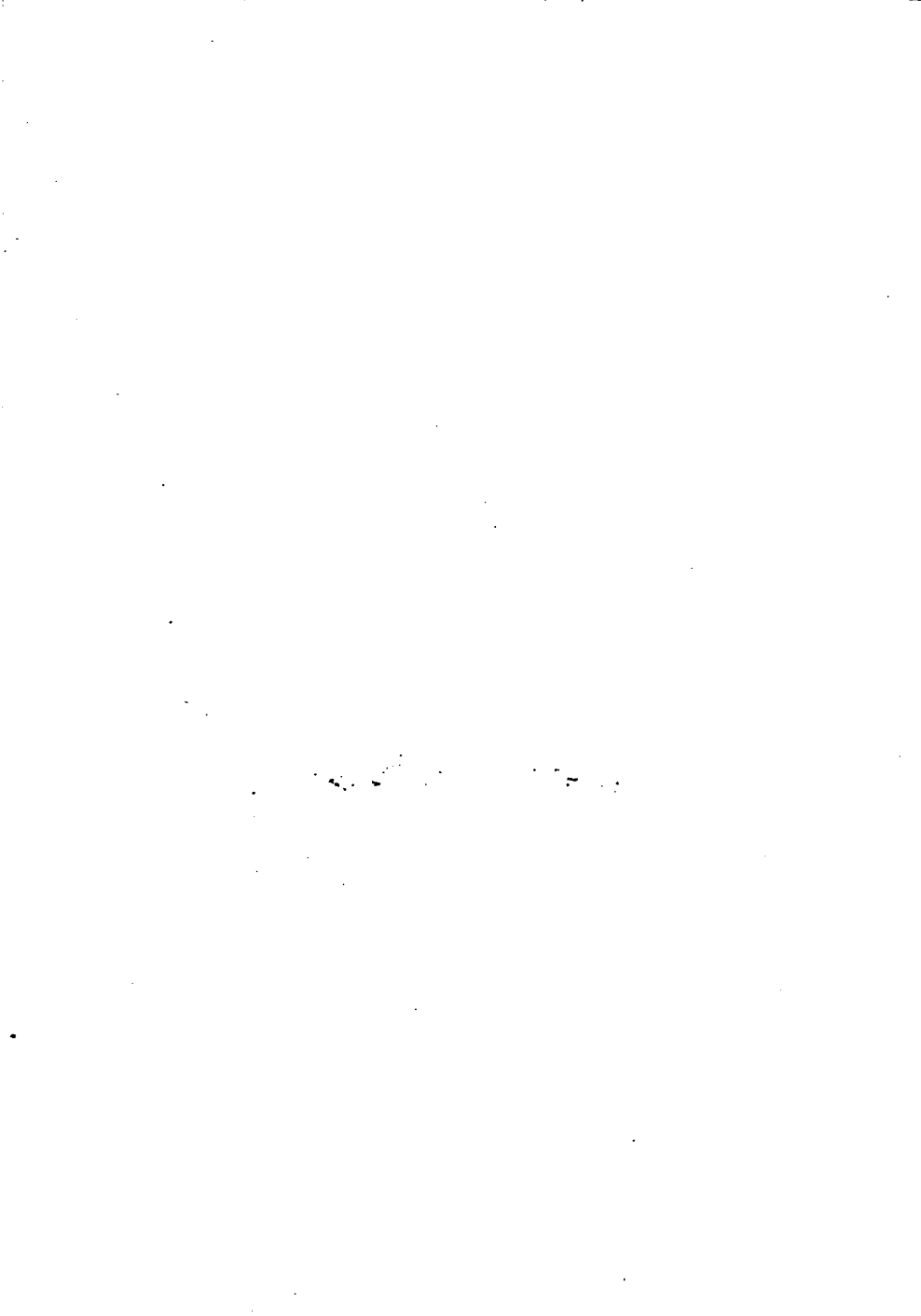
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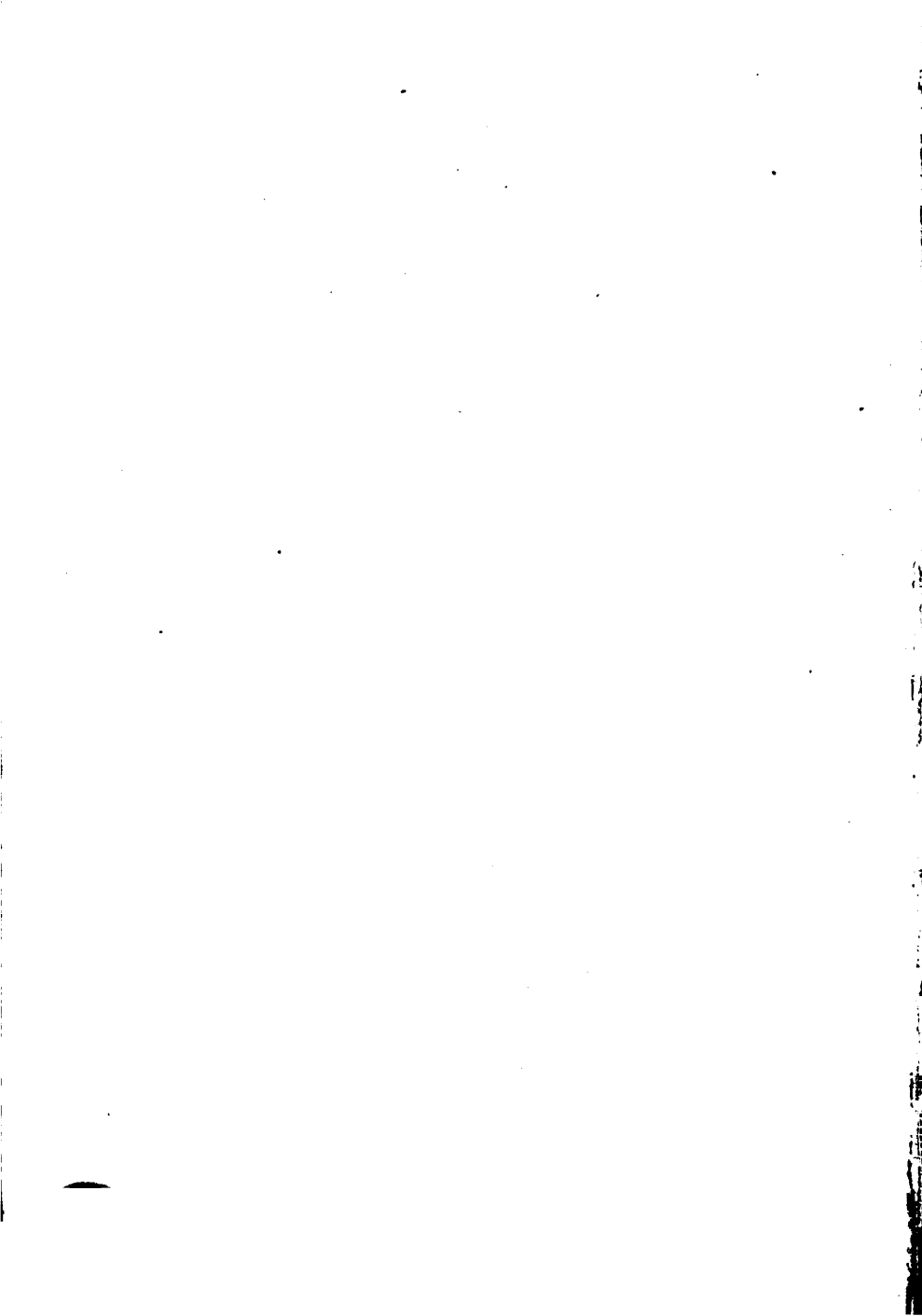
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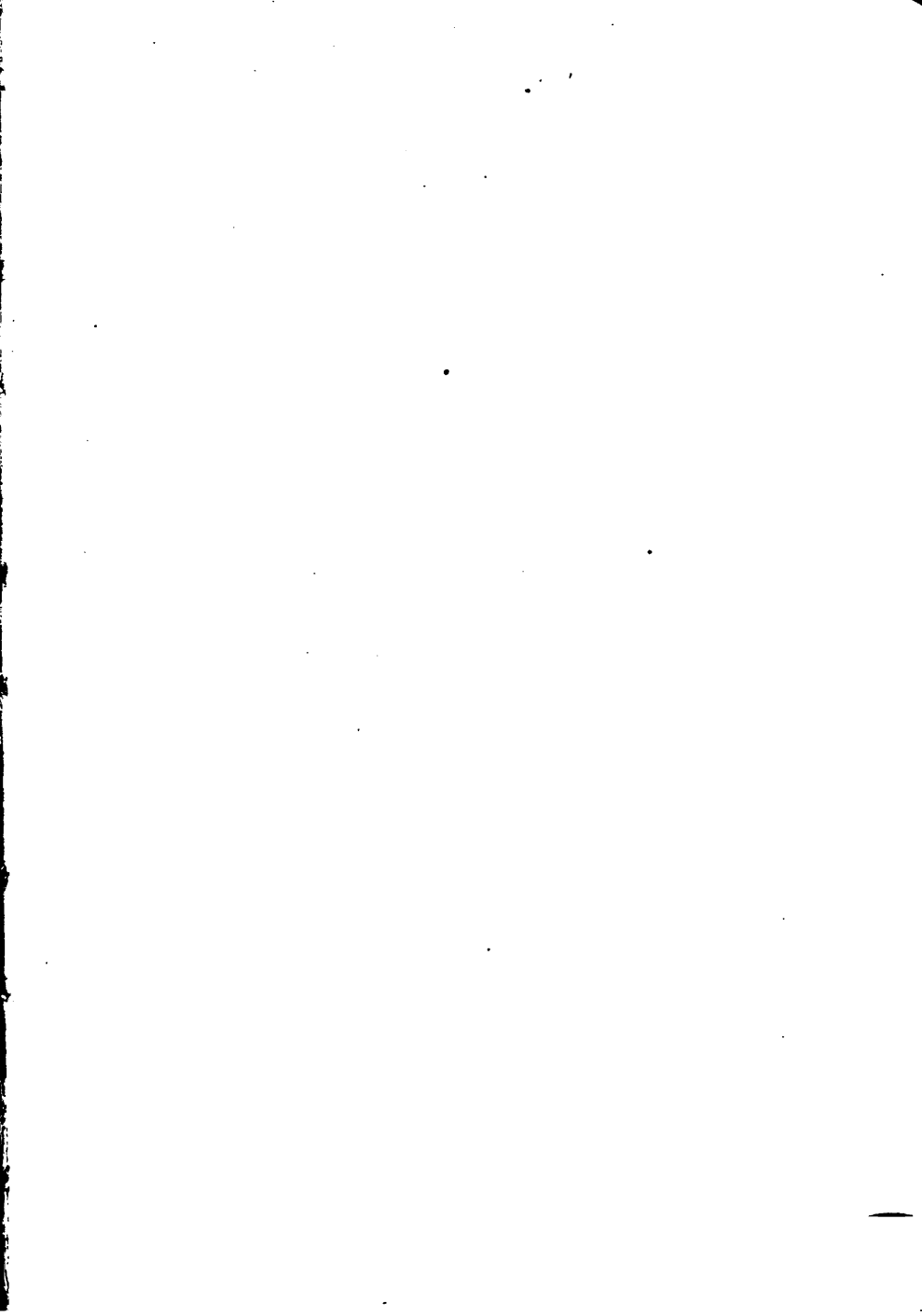
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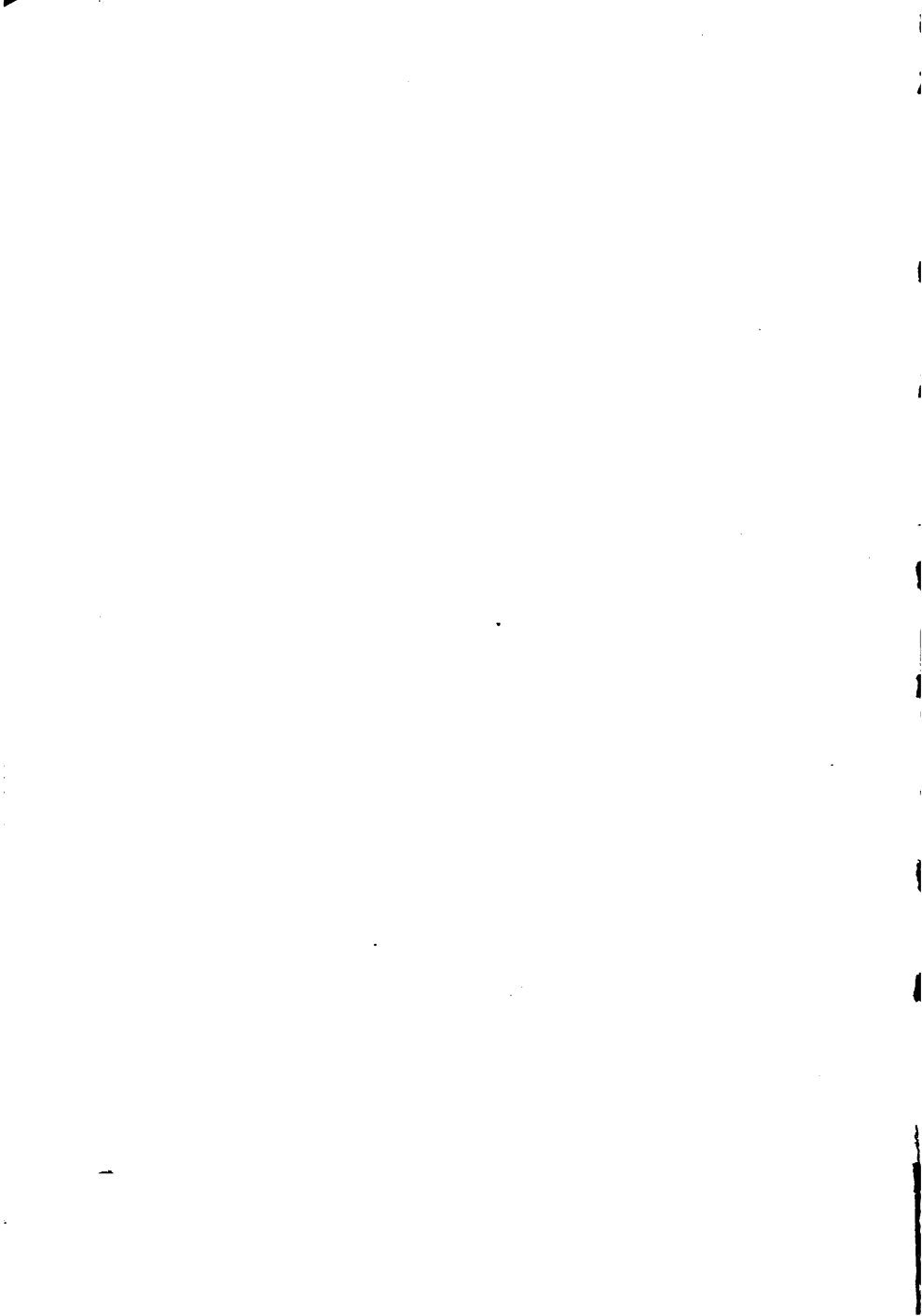
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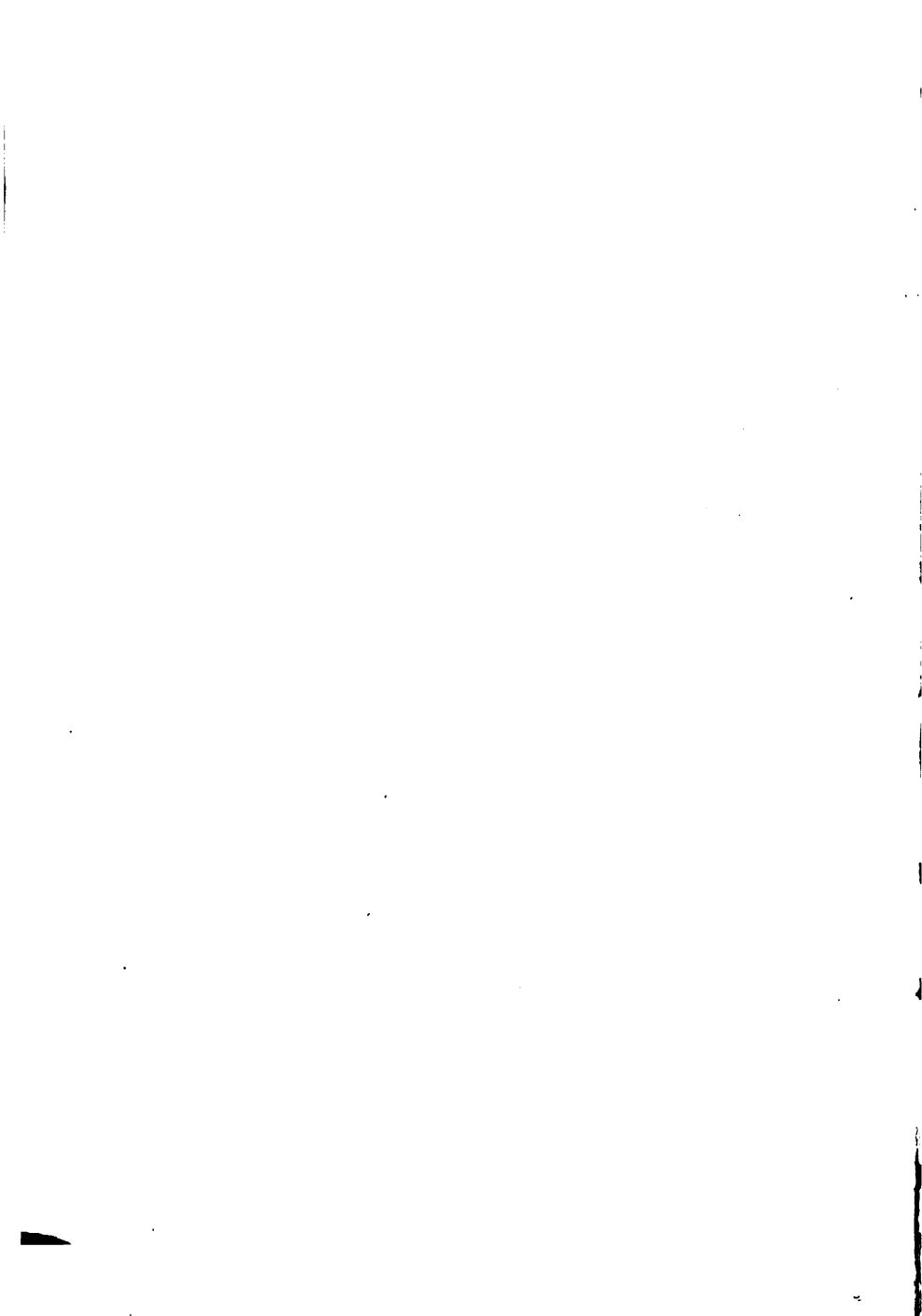








**Aesthetics:**  
**A Critical Theory of Art**





# AESTHETICS:

A Critical Theory of Art

*By*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Chapter I	11
BEAUTY AND ART.....	
Compared and related. Four historical conceptions.	
A new conception.	
Chapter II	22
ART AND THEORY.....	
Viewpoint of each defined. Exemplified by the relation of art to its technical and psychological principles.	
Chapter III	33
WHAT IS ART?.....	
A reconstruction of the popular, the critical, and the generic notion of art.	
Chapter IV	46
THE SUBSTANCE OF ART.....	
Painting from the standpoint of its material, technical, conventional, and psychological foundation. Critical examination; (1) <i>Hedonistic Theory</i> ; (2) <i>Expression Theory</i> in its various forms; (3) <i>Psychological Experimental Method</i> in its various forms and from the standpoint of five destructive defects.	
Chapter V	80
FORMULAS AND METHODS IN ART-THEORY...	
From the standpoints of the (1) <i>nature</i> , (2) <i>origin</i> , and (3) <i>value</i> of art. Formulas examined: (1) Creation, perfection, beauty, disinterestedness, "meaning in sensuous form," and imitation; (2) Aristotle, play-impulse, taste, art-impulse, sociological, sex, Freudian, and others; (3) art and utility, art and nature, art and science, art and morality. The method of each order of problems examined.	
Chapter VI	125
PAINTING.....	
Discussed under four heads: (1) The elements and their pictorial status; (2) the substantive value of each; (3) constructive principles; (4) principles of art-criticism.	

Chapter VII	POETRY.....	179
	Problem stated. Typical theories. Reconstruction based upon the formula: poetry is verbal meaning arranged and affected rhythmically and conventionally. An inquiry into the substantive nature of words, meanings, and things in their bearing upon each other and upon the other principles of poetry. Principles of literary criticism.	
Chapter VIII	MUSIC.....	219
	General characteristics and elements. Typical theories examined. A reconstruction based upon the conclusion that music is neither purely acoustic nor purely psychological but rather a matter of vital elements in vital relations, that is, a fusion of the two.	

## PREFACE

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To the discriminating individual, what constitute the elements of interest in painting, music, or poetry? This question I shall endeavor to answer in the following book, although I aim less specifically to increase art-appreciation than to correct the methods so long in vogue for determining the substance, origin, and value of art. I insist upon a description of the concrete element of the different arts in order to nullify the usual conception of art as something unitary or generic; for no idea has been more inhibitory in the development of aesthetics as a full-blown science.

Furthermore, in the usual conception of art, the psychological or subjective factors have been forced to the front with such one-sided prominence that the material aspect of the arts with all their rich divergency has been reduced to the background, or, even more commonly, wholly eclipsed. The outcome of this line of thought is false not only to art but to psychology. By enforcing the recognition of certain firmly established psychological and artistic principles, I hope thus further to amend existing art-theories.

It matters not, in a survey of the existing art-theories, whether we examine those originating with the philosopher and the psychologist or those originating with the critics of music, painting, and poetry (the proposed limit of my attention), the conviction deepens that art-theory demands a radically new construction, if for no other purpose than to neutralize the stultifying effect of the existing theories. Anyone

who has attempted to apply the science of aesthetics to art-appreciation, knows whereof I speak.

If the criticisms I offer are valid and the constructions sound, the book should rend the veil long-existing between art-appreciation and its appropriate science; it should serve to regulate research and to clarify criticism; and I hope that it will also serve to increase and vitalize the study of aesthetics in our universities and colleges in their new consecration to culture as opposed to "Kultur."

I have attempted to bring the varied aspects of art under one inclusive problem; namely, the formulation of the substance of each of the arts under four general principles—material, conventional, technical, and psychological—in their strict interdependence.

## CHAPTER I

### Beauty and Art

#### I

Beauty may baffle scientific cognition, but its reality remains undisputed. It appears in many avowed and unavowed forms both to civilized and primitive man; and even animals show themselves responsive to its presence. Its refining influence is, also, generally accepted. Responsiveness to beauty is considered not only a mark of culture, but, in the opinion of Emerson and of the Greeks, "beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue." Neither the ubiquity of beauty, then, nor its power and charm, generally awake dispute. It is only when the theorist inquires of *what* beauty consists that we are forced to pause. No phenomenon seems at once more compelling and elusive.

Art, too, exacts a wide acknowledgement of its existence and value. "Take up any newspaper of our times that you please, and you will find in every one a department of the drama, painting, and music. \* \* \* In every large city, huge buildings are constructed for museums, academies, conservatories, dramatic schools for representations, and concerts. Hundreds of thousands of workmen—carpenters, stonemasons, painters, cabinetmakers, paper hangers, tailors, jewelers, bronze-workers, compositors—spend their whole lives in arduous toil in order to satisfy the demand of art; so that there is hardly any other

human activity, except war, which consumes so much force as this.”<sup>1</sup>

We find similar evidence of the significance of art if we turn to the records of primitive peoples. Ernst Grosse, in his *Beginnings of Art*, writes that “there is no people without art. The rudest and most miserable tribes devote a large part of their time and strength to art—art, which is looked down upon and treated by civilized nations, from the height of their practical and scientific achievements, more and more as idle play. And yet \* \* \* if art were indeed only idle play, then natural selection should have long ago rejected the peoples which wasted their force in so purposeless a way, in favor of other peoples of practical talents.”

Art, like beauty, has a vitality which we cannot deny. To the theorist, however, beauty and art present genuine difficulties. Beauty is by far the more elusive of the two; yet, notwithstanding, a strong tendency exists among theorists to describe art in terms of beauty. It is true that this practice encounters a certain opposition in the contrast, usually enforced, between the beauty of art and the beauty of nature; but, in spite of this distinction, the recurrent assertion appears, that art is beauty even if all beauty is not art. In such a presentation, beauty appears as the wider and more inclusive term. But since art is concerned in the creation of the comic, the grotesque, the sublime, and the tragic, as well as in the creation of the beautiful, it would seem that either the term

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<sup>1</sup> Tolstoi, *What is Art?*



“beauty” is not an exhaustive description of art, or that as applied to art, it has a peculiar meaning, by virtue of which beauty is made to embrace the ideas of the comic, the grotesque, the sublime, and the tragic, as well as the idea of beauty in its more circumscribed meaning. Thus the usual habit of identifying art with beauty creates rather than solves a problem. But since the definition of beauty should follow rather than precede the analysis of art, and since my main concern in this book is with art, I shall not enter upon a discussion of beauty beyond its relation to art.

## II

Beauty has been made the subject of frequent inquiry; but theorists are anything but agreed as to the nature of beauty. Thinkers of the metaphysical type declare that beauty is an abstract, substantive entity which transcends the many particular instances of its manifestation; that things are not beautiful in and by themselves, but that they become beautiful to the extent in which they share or participate in abstract, transcendent beauty; and that the *what* of beauty is either Mind, Truth, Perfection, or Meaning—an ineffable something usually spelled with a capital. I mention this form of the beauty-theory merely to pass it by, for a conception of beauty that is non-dependent for its definition upon the concrete facts of the different arts contains little of practical moment for an aesthetic scientist. However, among the transcendent theorists, Plato is the classic example, and the following extract presents a clear statement of his position. “He who

sees the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time, or in one relation, or at one place, fair, at another time, or in another relation, or at another place, foul, as if fair to some and foul to others; or in the likeness of a face, or hands, or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or as existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place; but beauty, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things."

Theories need not of necessity be of this metaphysical type to partake of false abstraction from the facts actually involved. Kant, under the influence of British thinkers, fashioned a theory of beauty which, in outline, became the dominant model for art theorists. In the form generally adopted it consists (a) in a more or less complete abstraction of beauty from things; and (b) in the more or less complete foundation of beauty in an individual. "~~Things are not beautiful in themselves,~~" we are told, "~~but things derive their beauty from the expression of the mind.~~" Or, in Kant's own language: "In order to distinguish whether anything is beautiful or not, we refer the representation not to

the *object* \* \* \* but to the *subject*, and its feeling of pleasure and pain." (Italics are mine.)<sup>2</sup>

Everyone will admit that a psychophysical individual is an important factor in the determination of beauty. Beauty cannot be defined, as Plato essays, in its total abstraction from an *individual*. But neither can it be defined, as these theorists in harmony with Plato suggest, in its total abstraction from *objects*. I deny, therefore, that beauty is exclusively or even primarily derived "from the expression of the mind," or "from the feeling of pleasure and pain." We cannot by an exclusive reference to an *individual* account for beauty in its *divergent* forms. Deny that beauty is a bare generic abstraction, and we are forced to conclude that beauty in its many manifestations is the concrete expression of many different *objects*. In each of these forms, beauty is an individualized something. But it can be neither individualized nor differentiated in its many forms *without a more or less exclusive reference to the material in which it has its expression*; and, when not thus individualized and differentiated, it remains a bare, empty abstraction. Beauty in painting is not one and the same thing with beauty in music or poetry. Beauty in painting is as distinctive as the phenomenon of painting itself, and the beauty of music is as different from it as music is from painting. Regard beauty as removed from its concrete material and we may ask: What is that beauty in painting divorced from color which you say is one and the same thing with beauty in music divorced from tone? Affirm a beauty in music and painting that is independ-

<sup>2</sup> Kant's *Kritik of Judgment*, trans. by J. H. Bernard, p. 47.

ent of the materials respectively presented in music and painting, and you would have an idea of beauty totally bleached and depleted of content. It is due, then, to this abstraction from qualitative differences in things that this whole school of theorists forfeits the possibility of defining beauty in terms of more than one set of its necessary conditions. To the extent of their reference to the psychophysical individual, they are empirical; to the extent of their abstraction of beauty from things, they open the gates to all form of vagary. Hence for them, beauty of painting and music is one and the same thing, whether described as "the expression of the mind," or as some other common attribute. To think of the beauty of painting as primarily "the expression of color," or of music as primarily the "expression of tones," does not occur to them as in any sense essential. Differences of this order they are unable to incorporate; yet "the little more, and how much it is! and the little less, and what worlds away!" Hence their whole mode of procedure is calculated to eclipse, rather than to illuminate, in *what* specific attributes beauty consists.

In another form of the beauty-theory, we have the *what* of beauty identified with certain abstract qualities affirmed to exist either in art or in things in general. Beauty in this view *is* harmony, proportion, symmetry, unity in variety, perfection, meaning, reason, or truth. This theory has the advantage over Plato's in keeping us down to earth when dealing with a phenomenon of everyday occurrence, and, therefore, it is less strikingly abstract. Nor does it, like either of the two previous forms of the beauty-theory, wholly ignore the

objective thing as a constituent element in the determination of beauty. In another sense, however, it is equally as abstract as the previous ones, since it makes harmony, proportion, and symmetry *per se*, rather than the harmony, proportion, and symmetry of a concrete *something*, the evidence of beauty. Thus harmony in color is one thing and harmony in tone is another. What we enjoy in the one instance is wholly expressed as color, and what we enjoy in the other instance is wholly expressed as tone. What common meaning are we to attach to harmony when expressed in two such divergent things as color and tone? In fact, what meaning are we to attach to the term, when, as this theory would seem to demand, harmony is completely divorced both from color and from tone? In neither case is anyone able to affix an accurate meaning. A vague image borrowed from this or that context is a counterfeit substitute. Harmony as such has neither an existence, nor, in the two cases cited, a definable identity, unless perchance we agree that a zero is equal to a zero.

In like manner it can be shown that none of the other enumerated, abstract qualities, as such, constitutes the *what* of beauty. Thus perfection by itself is an abstract term which acquires meaning only when we speak of it in connection with some specific thing, for example, music, painting, verse, or thought. Perfection in an art may be a condition of its beauty, but it would be so only to the extent to which the materials and the aims of an art were brought to *their* highest and best expression; and since the arts are concrete and divergent, the beauty of each would also

be concrete and divergent; that is, "beauty of art," with each of the terms in the singular, should be replaced by the phrase "the beauties of the arts," with each of the terms in the plural. In consequence, beauty of art may be one thing and beauty of nature another, and, until we have fully and clearly deciphered the peculiar quality of each, we gain nothing but obscurity by grouping them under some common abstract term. The study of one manifestation of beauty, no doubt, may prove of service in the study of another; but beauty in its concrete forms is different from beauty in some imagined abstract form. Hence we merely stultify our efforts in an investigation of art if, at the outset, as is so common, we identify art with beauty *in general*, and beauty in general with certain inchoate, abstract ideas, divorced both from an agent and a concrete material.

The Experimental Method of psychology presents a fourth conception of beauty in its relation to art and to things in general. The first step with theorists of the experimental school is to analyze a complex art-product, such as painting, into its supposed elements,—colors, lines and symmetry. This emphasis upon concrete elements denotes an advance. *In their next step, however, they lose what they have gained.* Here they set about, as in the Kantian form of the beauty-theory, to determine the relative beauty of colors, lines, and symmetry by the exclusive reference of them to the "pleasure" experienced by a psychophysical individual. They hold that those colors or lines that occasion the most *pleasure* in a psychophysical agent are the most beautiful; that is, beauty with them is

essentially a condition born of certain psychophysical principles and the element of pleasure; and through this emphasis of theirs upon the psychological factors, the material elements are gradually displaced by the generic notion of beauty: "beauty is pleasure objectified," as Santayana states it. Yet even if their claim were correct—an hypothesis which, later, I shall have occasion to refute—beauty of *isolated lines and colors*, is not the same as beauty in *art*. Beauty of art, unfortunately for these theorists, demands something more than the mere reference of abstracted elements to a psychophysical individual; such elements must be considered in their effects upon each other and upon the approved aims of an art as well as upon a psychophysical agent. All work in painting, for example, is not beautiful. Yet we are unable to tell by such experiments as this method has formulated in its study of lines, colors, and symmetry, apart from the general aims, conventions, and technique of the art, what in the field of painting is a daub and what a masterpiece; for the daub, considered exclusively from the standpoint of its elements in relative isolation, in no way differs from the masterpiece. The method fails to explain or define beauty of *art* for several reasons: because it involves an incomplete analysis of an art-product; because it does not, except sporadically, consider these elements in their reciprocal relations; and because it attempts to determine beauty in art from a standpoint other than that of art. A more careful analysis of painting would show that it consists of light, sunlight, atmosphere, texture, spatial development, modelling in light and shade, drawing, represen-

tation, design, composition, as well as of colors, lines, and symmetry. And these aims or things are achieved in painting under the exclusive control of painting's own special conventions, standards, principles, and modes of procedure. Hence we cannot intelligently determine between a daub and a masterpiece by a mere investigation of color-preferences, since "the immediate effect of individual colors is modified," as their own exponents confess, "as soon as they enter as separate elements into such a complicated object as a picture." A decision in the relative value of a painting is possible only in and through the aid of such knowledge as we may have of painting *per se* with its own complex aims and modes of procedure. There is no short-cut passage here from an abstract conception of beauty to art; the sole passage here is from art to beauty. Exponents of the experimental theory occasionally admit their predicament. Thus we read: "The value of experiments does not consist in accounting for the effects of lines and colors, sounds, and rhythms, in so far as they may be combined into a total effect of a picture, or a piece of music. \* \* \* Their value lies in the light which they throw upon aesthetic experiences in general, which they represent, so to speak, in miniature." I deny, however, that the experimental method as developed today by psychologists is susceptible of even this minor degree of salvage, since they by confession not only fail to define the beauty of *art* but because they also fail to define lines and color, sound and rhythm, in their concrete and differentiated forms of beauty.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>I subject the Experimental Method to a thorough examination in Chapter IV, pp. 63-79.



I think I have sufficiently indicated, by way of an introduction, my position on the relation of beauty and art. Beauty, as we refer to it here and there, is a quality conditioned, in its varied appearance, by a diverse constitution of objects on the one hand, and, on the other, by the complex constitution of an agent. It is mainly by virtue of the former reference, however, that beauty is individualized and differentiated in its various forms. The only valid mode of procedure, then, in determining beauty of art is to pass, not from beauty to art, but from art to beauty. Hence art shall constitute the central interest of my inquiry, and I shall indicate a conception of beauty in its direct bearing upon each of the arts. When in the ordinary procedure we, instead, merge the subject of art into that of beauty, the invariable outcome has been, that we divest art of the substantive reality it obviously possesses in order to endow abstract beauty with a substantive nature it never can possess.

## CHAPTER II

### Art and Theory

A discussion of art may be hampered by a failure to distinguish between the viewpoints of art and science. Art demands direct apprehension through our sense-organs; nor does it in this present anything peculiar, except in its difference from the general viewpoint of science. By direct apprehension, mediated or otherwise, we perceive most objects of our everyday experience. We may thus apprehend a house from without or within by merely opening our eyes and looking at it. It stands there relatively fixed and determined in a specific group of sense-qualities, and it must be perceived, if it is perceived at all, by the direct aid of our sense-organs. So it is with art. A sonata by Beethoven or a picture by Raphael does not change its total structure with every whim of man; and these objects, because dominantly sensuous, must be perceived directly, even though they also have a technical and a psychological foundation inviting an indirect or scientific mode of apprehension. Thus a blind man may know much *about* color; but to know color as such, he must have eyes that can see. We cannot deny that painting, ultimately, is a structure in color, and music a structure in tone; whatever other qualities they may embrace, sense-perception, therefore, is essential for their actual apprehension.

The viewpoint of science, also, has a basic structure. Thus we may see and know a great deal about a house

by looking at it, and living in it, even though we may, in this mode of apprehending it, exclude a knowledge of the mechanics present in its construction or the physics and chemistry present in the constitution of the material. The house itself is one thing, and the many *conditions* of its existence and production are another. Thus the average individual thinks he apprehends the nature of water by a mere reference to its ordinary qualities and properties, whereas a scientist may insist that its nature is explained by the exclusive reference of its origin to hydrogen and oxygen. Science is primarily interested in the *conditions* that are present in the production of something, not in that *something per se*. As an outcome of this bias, a scientist may easily confound the two viewpoints, or, even worse, he may often resolve the former viewpoint into his own special viewpoint. Either step constitutes a serious error.

I cannot enlarge upon the philosophy that enters at this point. It is sufficient to state that, if a scientist denies the relative completeness of the former viewpoint, he is by force of this same logic constrained to deny the relative completeness of his *conditions*. For *conditions* are themselves, also, some form of things; hence they, too, demand the former viewpoint for their actual apprehension. But if the scientist denies the validity of the other viewpoint, he would of necessity, like Tantalus, find himself endlessly compelled to reach from the *conditions* attained to such as he may deem to lie beyond, until at length everything in this world would vanish at his touch, his one-sided viewpoint and himself included. The scientific is

valid only as *a* viewpoint; it resolves itself into sheer absurdity when it pretends to be the *only* viewpoint.

The bearing of these two viewpoints upon any of the arts is obvious. We may contemplate a painting and enjoy it, even though we may know little of the fundamental mechanics and psychology of its production. It is true, of course, that my enjoyment of painting would be not only enhanced but also more rationally and comprehensively controlled, if I set about to acquire a certain scientific mastery of its mechanics. The reason for this is, that the mechanics of an art denotes not merely the display of mechanical skill, as in drawing, coloring, or modelling, but the existence of a material condition that either inhibits or exhibits the development of certain pictorial aims.<sup>1</sup> Thus a "black etched line of Rembrandt will give me a far spreading horizon not in the direction of his line, but running to it. A few scratches of his will make the earth sink or rise, remain solid or be covered with water —no longer, in fact, be ink and paper, but light and air and shadow and varying form." Hence I cannot properly apprehend a painting unless I place myself at the artist's viewpoint, shaped as it is at every turn by the limitations and the possibilities of his material, and by the technical complexity and mastery of engendered aims or qualities. It is a common-place in art that we do not see the painting before us in any real sense of the word unless we look at it with an edu-

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<sup>1</sup>By the term *pictorial* I imply the many constituent objects of interest in a painting, as color, light, texture atmosphere, spatial development, etc.

cated eye. There are two reasons for this: One reason is that painting, to the informed eye, is a *complex* phenomenon. The other is, that, to perceive, we must first preperceive. But a preperception, when relevant to any of the arts, of necessity demands that it be moulded by a knowledge of the materials, the technique, and the historic forms or aims present in the development of that art. Hence no art can be properly grasped, even in its direct aspect, unless our senses are carefully trained in the possible, the desired, and the historic development of its material. A painting, of course, may be apprehended with an uninformed eye; but the apprehension thus achieved would be a most contracted thing,—a bare caricature of what could and should be attained. An extended knowledge of an art's technique and history is, then, necessary to a proper apprehension of it; but the knowledge, notwithstanding, is of a kind that informs the eye and re-enforces direct perception. "I would chiefly recommend," the artist, Sir Joshua Reynolds writes, "that an implicit obedience to the Rules of Art, as established by the practice of the great masters, should be exacted from the young students. \* \* \* For it may be laid down as a maxim, that he who begins by presuming on his own sense, has ended his studies as soon as he has commenced them. Every opportunity, therefore, should be taken to discountenance that false and vulgar opinion, that rules are the fetters of genius; they are fetters only to men of no genius. \* \* \* The artist who has his mind thus filled with ideas and his hand made expert by practice, works with ease and readiness; whilst he who would have you believe that he is waiting

for the inspirations of genius, is in reality at a loss how to begin; and is at last delivered of his monsters with difficulty and pain." <sup>2</sup>

But this reference to technique in the apprehension of a work of art is easily misunderstood. If the technique of an art is not directly reflected in, or better, resolved into a pictorial or musical result, we have two things and not one; namely, art *and* technique. We must admit with Michael Angelo that an artist paints not merely with his hands but with his brain; but what he paints is a pictorial result, not a technique. In the best sense of the words, the two are one; but they cease to be one, not only through a lack in vision on the part of one artist following in the steps of another, but also through a lack of equal mastery. The technique of an art, to be sure, would not have been so sharply differentiated from the artistic result if art-production did not forbid mere repetition or duplication. We do not encourage a score of composers to create one and the same "Dixie," identical note for note. In fact there is no field, other than art, wherein repetition is so promptly detected and exposed. Artists, of course, may use the same general technique, but they must not produce the same musical or pictorial result. Another reason for this separation is that the technical aspect of an art is amenable to an indirect or scientific analysis and comparison, whereas the pictorial or musical results permit a direct comparison but not a scientific analysis. As soon as we analyze the pictorial or musical result

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<sup>2</sup>Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Fifteen Discourses on Art*, pp. 5, 7, 25.

by a reference even to its technique, we transform an elusive sensuous-thing into one more crude. Hence the tireless assertion that the scientific viewpoint destroys the peculiar charm of art even more radically than the chemist or the physicist destroys the direct sensuous character of water. From this standpoint the technique of an art is the mere embodiment of its science, tricks, and tools. These represent the indispensable *means* whereby certain desired artistic results are achieved. As such, they are the necessary scientific and practical adjuncts. Some may delight in the adjuncts more than in the direct, artistic results, but vagary of this kind does not constitute the ruling practice. The properly informed and attuned mind does not confuse them even where they are closely interwoven.

We have a more serious problem on our hands, however, when we attempt to relate art to its underlying psychology. The technique of an art and the artistic results are closely combined; a mere twist of the hand, a mere shade in a tone or a color, and you convert one into the other. It is highly questionable, however, whether the *knowledge* of art's underlying psychology ever affects either the development of an art or our direct enjoyment of it. Psychology, no doubt, may aid in expanding or correcting the mechanics and the constituent aims of an art; but for psychology to perform this task, it would be necessary for it to develop its present infantile proportions in aesthetics into something that is far more formidable and gigantic. As it exists today, psychology offers an artist practically nothing in the way of a technique, and absolutely

nothing in the growing, complex development of artistic aims. It does not even properly familiarize us with a single art, and yet it would presume to translate the whole range of arts into purely psychological terms. But art is art and psychology is psychology; the two things are not one.

It is obvious that art has a psychological side; first, in the fact that the materials of the arts are largely of an order designated in psychology as sensations and perceptions; and, secondly, in the fact that art grows out of the needs of man and caters to many of his natural and cultivated interests. Let us then note the way theorists commonly construe the relation of art and psychology, and the correction of which they stand in need.

The charge made against both psychologists and philosophers is that, with their usual viewpoints, they lose the actual arts by a conversion of them into something else. Perhaps the more accurate correlation of psychology and art, then, may be gleaned from the direct exponents of art, namely, the artist and the critic. Since a large part of this book will be devoted to the scientific theorists, we may safely neglect the latter for the present.

There can be no doubt of our dependence upon artists and critics for a real and proper orientation in the varied fields of art. This aim of theirs has inspired a library of many admirable books. Only too frequently, however, they are overlaid with a dubious theory whereby they as commonly mislead as guide us in the proper grasp of art. I shall not at this point attempt to state the full variety of their confusion.



It will suffice for our present purpose to show to what extent artists and critics themselves confound art with psychology.

LaFarge, the painter, in his *Consideration of Painting* approvingly quotes the following statement by the painter Fromentin. "Any work of art," he quotes, "which has been deeply felt by its maker is also naturally well-painted. And any work of art in which the hand reveals itself in felicity or in splendour is through that alone a work belonging to the brain or has its origin in it." The emphasis here upon *feeling* rather than upon technical and pictorial conditions, and upon the *brain* rather than upon the possibilities of color, illustrates the substitution of psychology for art under discussion. This one-sided emphasis upon the psychological factor, however, is less guardedly stated in the following lines by the critic J. C. Van Dyke: "What we seek for in every great picture is nature combined with the human element. The artist, his manner of seeing, his manner of thinking, his manner of telling, becomes an important factor in the picture of which we needs must take account. The facts of nature \* \* \* to possess a serious interest for us upon canvas, require to be heated with poetic fire, transfused, and newly wrought in the crucible of the painter's mind."

There is enough truth in both these statements to lend them an air of plausibility. The individual, beyond doubt, plays a large role in art, but so, too, do the materials of art in their technical, pictorial, and historic development. Yet there are four lines of thought, easily misconstrued, that converge upon

the individual as the central, or rather, exclusive factor in art-production. They are exemplified in the two extracts. I shall examine them in a serial order.

(1.) As already observed, an artist must continually invent and create anew; the very existence of an art depends upon this unceasing variety and novelty. Invention, therefore, becomes a striking characteristic of art. As such, it may be logically abstracted; but *in art*, invention may not relevantly interest *in its abstraction*; it may relevantly interest only when and as it is expressed in some new pictorial or musical result, since the more peculiar thing of an art is to be sought in the development of its own special material and aims. Apart from this material, invention would have no scope for this *specific* expression; and, when we center attention upon the psychological rather than upon the artistic aspect of its *concrete* expression, we of necessity abandon an interest in art for an interest in psychology. Yet it is this psychological interest that is placed to the forefront in both of the extracts; and such extracts might be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

(2.) An artist, we were told, inevitably reflects in a given work of art, his own individual manner of seeing and doing. The statement that "The style is the man" is the usual formulation of this fact. This truth has many plausible turns and attractions, but it generally embodies a fundamental error. My criticism is that an individual's mode of seeing and doing, if it does not directly reflect itself *as* a pictorial or musical result, is a psychological process of no direct value *as art*, however interesting the process itself may be as an item in biography or psychology. Art is pri-

marily a matter of results, not of processes, whether psychological or technical, unless directly affecting the result.

(3.) Art, it is true, to some degree originates from and addresses its appeal exclusively to human needs, sensibility, and emotion. We do not, however, in art concern ourselves directly with these psychological elements as such, but only in so far as they in actual fact condition a more masterful and subtle expression of its constituent aims, determined materially and conventionally as well as psychologically. In fact, an artist whose seeing, doing and feeling have not been shaped and transformed by "an implicit obedience to the Rules of Art as established by the practice of the great masters" forfeits the possibility of ever becoming a master himself. *Greatness in art implies not individual but artistic differences.* The same order of confusion obtains here as in the two previous instances.

(4.) It is intimated that man claims our primary attention whereas "the facts of nature" require to be "transfused and newly wrought in the crucible of the painter's mind" before they can interest. But, I ask, is it possible that man is so provincial in his interests that in all things great and small he can enjoy nothing but the physiognomy of man? Our interest in a musical composition, then, it would seem, is not a direct interest in tone, rhythm, harmony, and composition, as we in our non-theoretical moments are inclined to think, but merely an interest in psychology or biography. Yet, we may add, how could the musician externalize himself in forms of musical splendour

if music as such did not *intrinsically* possess this reality and charm? Art-theory is in sad need of revision, when, turn where we will, the reality of art is surrendered for a shadow. In the first place, theorists confuse the viewpoints of art and science; and, in the second place, fail to recognize the relative rank of the four principles of art, the material, technical, conventional, and psychological. The material principle is, obviously, the more ultimate of the four; for, otherwise considered, each of the arts would forfeit its distinctive character. These two elements of confusion explain why a subjective standard of art all but displaces an objective one in general art-theory.

## CHAPTER III

### What is Art?

#### I

The objection might be made that the meaning given to art in the previous chapter was somewhat arbitrary. As a natural rejoinder, I ask: What are the meanings commonly assigned to this term? A little reflection will disclose that general usage is equivocal or out-and-out erroneous. Thus, for example, we are often informed that, among other things, music, painting, and poetry are art, but we are not definitely informed just what "other things" are to be so designated. Nor, in the next place, are we always specifically told whether art is coincident in meaning with the *whole* of music, painting, or poetry. We discriminate within them between inferior and superior productions. Obviously, all music, painting, and poetry must not be included. Then, again, the practice of grouping a large variety of heterogeneous objects under one common term, has led many theorists to assign to art a generic or unitary meaning.

The first of these conceptions implies the fact that art is a list or group of particular things. It is the least sophisticated of the three meanings; but for that very reason, perhaps, also the least spoiled. It assigns to art a concrete rather than an abstract meaning. In this usage of the term, painting is an art not by virtue of some quality superinduced upon its material,

but by virtue of its own concrete existence, and, as such, opposed to other concrete things, as for example, a machine or a stone. We deal in this meaning of art with *things*, not with abstract qualities or definitions. It contains the further implication that art is plural and not a unitary something.

In the second meaning of the term, art is a normative or standardized product within any one of this group or list of particular arts. It is upon its mere face the most critical and correct of the three conceptions, but it is seldom, if ever, correctly formulated. It usually allies itself with the third rather than the first conception, and in this meaning, art *is* (abstract) perfection.

The third conception, and the most delusive, intimates that art is something generic. Art in this rendering of it, *is*, singly or otherwise, meaning, truth, an appearance, perfection, beauty, expression, imitation, or objectified, permanent, or disinterested pleasure. This list of attributes could be indefinitely extended, for few theorists, if any, escape the adoption of the generic view. I shall consider each of these conceptions in their common relation.

## II

There is a deep-seated feeling in man that things are and of necessity must be as sharp and distinct in character as their corresponding terms. This feeling stands in need of correction. Things or objects, however you please to term them, are *not* as sharply marked and distinct in nature as their corresponding

terms would seem to indicate. As a single illustration, take four such terms as water, ice, snow, and vapor. Are the objects which these denote four things or only one? Although such a question may, to the uninitiated, actually appear absurd, it is, notwithstanding, one of such recognized difficulty with philosophers and physical scientists that they are almost unanimously of the opinion that it is wholly insolvable. Certain scientists, by all the rules of their reasoning, dogmatically affirm that the four things are *one*. Other scientists, no less dogmatic, as emphatically affirm that they are *four*. The cautious philosopher in general merely shakes his head and affirms that we cannot finally know one way or the other. Here, then, we have an order of truth, carefully to be noted, not only when we try to distinguish between the fine and the minor arts, or between the fine and the mechanical arts, or between an aesthetic and a non-aesthetic experience, but also when we attempt to distinguish art in either one of the three meanings indicated. *Accurate as we may be, we shall never wholly escape the inclusion of an arbitrary element in our definition of art.* Perceiving a difficulty in advance, however, both insures us against the pitfalls which a disregard of it naturally entails, and enables us to know what and what not to expect in the way of a scientific solution of anything, whether the subject of an inquiry be art or so tangible a subject as chemistry or physics. It is only when we unwittingly make "the jumping over the moon" our aim that we may come to repine by landing in a ditch.

## III

Many distinctions that have come into existence show that we do not all embrace under the term art the same list of things. In the most restricted use of the term, art and painting are apparently the two things most nearly synonymous. But while many would agree to enlarge the list by the addition of music, poetry, sculpture, and architecture, others would insist upon including acting, dancing, landscape-gardening, and the minor arts,—“wood-carving and terra cottas, coins and mosaics, glass and metal-work, carved ivory and jewelry, bookbinding, pottery, and textiles.” Yet the number of things embraced under the term does not end even here. We are frequently told that life, speech, manners, even our daily work, should and can be raised to the level of a fine art. Thus we read: “Every great life is a work of art, for it is the production of a character in which inheres some form of grandeur or of beauty. The difficulty and the glory of this achievement throw into the shade the triumphs of Raphael and Phidias, the first of whom had only to deal with colors on a palette, and the second with hardness in a block of marble. But the man or the woman who constructs noble character deals with elements a thousandfold more unmanageable and refractory—with selfishness, with the love of ease, with the loathing of effort, with the opposition of others, with the downward pull of inherited evil, with the backward pull of the tide of degeneration and decay.”

If we change from an extensive to an intensive survey, the same order of perplexity confronts us. Take



the undisputed art of music as the subject of inquiry. We have already perceived by the normative conception of art that inferior musical compositions are not to be included. But let us not stop with that, for "ragtime" also is music, but shall we call it art? "Dixie" and "Home Sweet Home" are music; but again, would we call them art? We distinguish in the playing of a mere technician and an artist. The achievements of a mere technician, apparently, are not art. We may feel somewhat divided as to the proper classification of "Dixie," "Home Sweet Home" and songs in general, but we seem to feel little uncertainty with regard to an opera, a symphony, or a sonata. "Home Sweet Home," however, as sung by Madame Patti, certainly is art; but is "ragtime" ever to be thus designated, even when well executed? What then, specifically, are the traits of art?

To enumerate the things that are properly included in art is obviously no easy matter; and the same problem is created when we focus attention upon its distinguishing traits. Include or exclude what things or traits we please, we would find that no two people could be brought into full agreement as to what things or traits are and are not properly denominated art. Such uncertainty is not without a cause. We are asked to identify instances of art before we define it; and yet, we cannot adequately define art until we have fixed upon every approved instance of it. We are thus, at the very outset of our inquiry, confronted by a dilemma. In this perplexity and uncertainty, it has been usual to pass from the first to the third or speculative conception of art, instead of passing from the

first to the second or critical conception. Hence in the usual theory, we find a description of the traits of art in the abstract; that is, art is no longer the concrete thing hinted at in the first and re-affirmed in the more approved and critical conception, but the fortuitous embodiment of some abstract trait. As a result, theorists have come to adopt the term art in one or more of its many possible and undefined meanings, and, thus equipped, they set about to determine wherein art in this more or less undefined meaning differs from nature, science, or a machine, instead of grappling with the problem directly and in the concrete as the first and second conception of art would seem to demand.

The same incorrect procedure, in much the same form, is encountered when the *agent* rather than the *art-product* is the subject of inquiry. It is not unusual for theorists, when considering their undefined notion of art from this viewpoint, to affirm that the aesthetic experience, as it is termed, is radically different from the moral, the religious, or the logical experience, just as they assume these experiences, in turn, to be distinct each from the other. They do not attempt to particularize the varied forms of the aesthetic experience, between the experience of painting and that of music, for example, although psychology instructs us that emotions are intimately bound up with perceptions. Instead of meeting this direct and more formidable issue, they occupy themselves, unwittingly, with the task of distinguishing between an *assumed* aesthetic and other *assumed* forms of human experience. In this method, the usual procedure consists in identi-

fying art with whatever evokes this hypothetical, or better still, this abstract and highly questionable conception of an aesthetic experience. With methods so faulty, little light is to be expected from general theory on the subject of art's own peculiar material or traits. In fact, the vicious quality of these methods is directly responsible for their abortive results in the sphere of aesthetics.

Why under the impetus of the third conception do we usually speak of the arts in the singular rather than in the plural? Is art something over and above the plural arts,—music, painting, poetry, etc? If so, how shall we dispose of the plural (divergent) aspects, and how shall we conceive art in the singular? Thus, by way of analogy, I might ask, how shall I dispose of red, green, and blue when classified under the generic term, color; and how, in its abstraction, shall I conceive the generic term? We may define this common (generic) element in one way or another, but we would never by such a method succeed in defining red, green, and blue in their divergent and individualized natures. Of the relative importance of the two orders of reality I need not speak. Similarly, what do we imply when referring to painting, music, and poetry under the one term of art? Has this term any meaning apart from painting, music, and poetry in their *divergent* aspects? If it does, why do we actually seek *different* arts when in all of them we *seem* to concern ourselves with the self-same thing, however abstract or irrelevant? It is a truism that no mere common quality can exhaust the full nature or reality of divergent objects. Hence, if we do not learn to correlate the common quality of

the arts—if such a quality exists—with the divergent quality of each, we shall be compelled to deny real differences between the arts, as, for example, between painting and music. None of the arts, however, is a mere duplication of some other. Not only is a delight in one of them compatible with a rejection of the others, but knowledge of one is wholly compatible with ignorance of the others; and, where appreciation is extended to embrace many of the arts, the delight in each is strikingly unique and unprocurable in any other form. Plurality in art-production, art-interest, or art-preference is incapable of justification where art is identified exclusively with some single, abstract property. Yet champions of the third conception have spent their energy in depicting the unitary element of the various arts, and they either ignored the plural element or treated it as if it were merely accidental. But art in the concrete is the reality, not art in the abstract; just as red, green, and blue are the realities, not color in the abstract.

All productions in poetry, painting, or music, however, are not art. We would reject as art, a doggerel, a daub, or a mere jingle of tones. But how shall we reconcile this critical distinction with the foregoing emphasis upon the plural rather than upon the unitary aspect?

Brahms, the composer, reflects a view widely championed both within and beyond the sphere of music which may help us to find an answer. Brahms is reported to have said that, by actually perfecting a single piece of music, one accomplishes more in the way of art "than by beginning or half-beginning ten.

Let it rest, let it rest, and keep going back to it and working it over again until it is completed, as a finished work of art, until there is not a note too much nor too little, not a bar you could improve upon. Whether it is also beautiful is an entirely different matter; but perfect it must be \* \* \* perfect and unassailable." Now I do not deny that the presence of perfection is a central trait in art; but I maintain that perfection is not the only factor that is essential. We may admit that music, lacking in perfection, is not art. But it is equally true that certain kinds of music, as indicated before, are not commonly regarded as works of art even though they may be more perfect than other forms of music which are commonly so regarded. Such inconsistency in ideas may be a virtue, but it is also a virtue to perceive the reason for the inconsistency. It is sufficient to state that perfection divorced from all material is a sheer abstraction; and that certain kinds of material, when brought to *their* perfection, solve the problem. But what kind of material is properly incorporated? Thus suspended, we may either helplessly revert to the first conception of art with its inextricable confusion, or we may blindly pass on to the third conception with its long list of empty abstractions. Better than either, I ask you first of all to recall the fact that objects do not exist in nature with prefixed measures and boundaries, and, for that reason, that the inclusion of an arbitrary factor can never be wholly avoided in the definition of even the simplest of objects. And now, let us return to the question: what kind of material is properly incorporated?

There can be no doubt that art reveals its proper meaning in the critical forms: art is primarily a matter of excellence. But the problem instantly returns: art is an excellence of what? At this juncture, we may venture an unelaborated answer: art in each of its plural forms represents a certain standardized material, technical, conventional, and psychological perfection. But, in this view, we must insist upon a thorough-going interdependence of these four principles, and avoid all forms of abstraction. We must not, for example, wholly abstract from the *material* the psychological *aim* which informs an artistic result, since the aim incorporates the material for its full definition as obviously as the material incorporates the aim in the artistic result. Creation, too, may be thought of in its logical abstraction; but creation, as it appears in an art, is "materially" controlled and translated. Genius never comes to flower in fields that it does not specifically cultivate, nor in fields that are unresponsive to cultivation. "Nature," writes Whistler, "contains the elements, in color and form, of all pictures \* \* \* but the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group these elements *with science*, that the result may be beautiful." Thus creation in art is not without control. A further control and translation of the psychic element is made evident by the fact, as stated by C. J. Holman, "that the true painter's emotion sums up and concentrates his experience in terms of paint, as the poet sums up his experience in terms of rhythm. It seizes on the facts of the subject that are essential to *pictorial* expression and rejects all others."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Notes on the Science of Picture-making; p. 11.

Thus art continues to be "the expression of one's own personal experience," but it is a "personal experience" that has been shaped, controlled, and translated by such factors as represent the material, the conventions, the aims, and the laws of a specific art. This theory does not wholly preclude individual initiative. What it affirms is that the initiative must be relevant to a specific art with its own fundamental principles and capacities. Nor does the existence of one law in art preclude the discovery of new laws more far-reaching. There is nothing in the universe, however infinitesimal, that does not have its own mode of behaviour, and art, as it is actually produced, is no exception in this discovery of new laws or principles. Few artists, however faulty their *theoretical* conception of art, fail to enforce this truth. Thus the sculptor Hildebrand, in his admirable little book on the *Problem of Form*, throughout insists upon the fact that "with the artist's personal development, this or that problem will dominate and become the main one to be solved. In no case, however, is artistic ability manifest in wilfully ignoring the requirements of the material worked in. Those artists who deny all kind of objective demands are the anarchists of art, and are not to be taken seriously."

When we have recognized *the primacy* of the *material* aspect of art and the proper correlation with it of the psychological, the technical, and conventional aspects, the question of central importance to art is: Has an individual forced a given field to yield its maximum? We attain a measure of this "maximum" in a given production by comparing it with the recognized

achievements in its field. The apprehension of it, of course, must be direct; but by a comparative study of one result with others, the apprehension is made more conscious and deliberate; it enables us to perceive why, in a given result, nothing more wonderful under the conditions could be achieved. Thus perfection, or if you wish, beauty, in an art is the relative *ne plus ultra* in the qualitative development of its fourfold substance. But the excellence that is realized is never an abstract thing; it is the excellence of some specific substance—material, technical, conventional, and psychological; and this substance, peculiar to each art, particularizes and differentiates the excellence or beauty with all the divergency with which it particularizes and differentiates that art. The perfections thus created may be abstracted. In this act of thought we separate the common from the divergent element. But the separation that ensues is logical, not actual. We must not, as is so common, make a generic entity of perfection; but instead, we must resolve it back into the particular arts. Perfection *per se* has no actual existence. When we divorce perfection from a special material or aim, or better, when we conceive it as non-dependent upon a specific material or aim, we forfeit the actuality so commonly assigned to it whether in art or in life. On the other hand, when we conceive perfection thus particularized, we conserve what is best in the first and the second conception of art; and when we do not thus particularize it, we pass from the second to the third and most questionable meaning of art. This contention, I maintain, is fundamental, and it can be settled in a final form only by recognizing,



in accordance with psychological and philosophical truth, what we actually and intelligently enjoy in an art. Such a survey is in part the aim of this book.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Should the reader have less interest in the critical examination of existing theories than in the constructive aspects of my own theory, he may omit Chapters IV and V and pass on to Chapters VI, VII, and VIII.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Substance of Art

#### I

In the previous chapter I ventured the statement that art should be conceived and designated in the plural as an achieved excellence in the existence of some specific substance; and I characterized this substance as material, technical, conventional, and psychological. In Chapter I, I defended the relative primacy of the material principle; and in Chapter II, I emphasized the converse; namely, the relative subordination of the technical and psychological principles to the material. In this presentation, art is no generic abstraction. In fact, I deny that a generic conception has a descriptive value of any account for a single art. Nor must the recurrent insistence upon an obsolete type of thought blind us to the illusory character of a generic theory; for just as we have been forced to speak of science in the plural, so it is necessary to speak of art. In support of this claim, I shall, in this and the next chapter, present a critical review of the more entrenched of the current theories and formulas; and after thus preparing our way, I shall embark upon the formulation of a method essential for the scientific cognition of painting, music, and poetry. The generalizations that I have thus far essayed must not, then, for the present at least, be regarded above the level of workable hypotheses; and I emphasized them largely for

the purpose of enforcing the recognition of a host of heterogeneous facts in their more usual interrelation. In fact, I have already intimated how inadequate and how pernicious the established formulas are even when in his formulations a theorist purports to present a single art. The more exhaustive account will now demand a larger space.

In order to get the facts for proper reference as definitely as possible before us, I shall briefly consider painting in the four-fold character of its substantive nature. Painting is a unique phenomenon, although painting in its way is no more unique than either music or poetry. It is bi-dimensional; but by a very natural process develops the third dimension. One of its central interests is *light*, which it often depicts with a dazzling reality, and yet the actual illumination of a canvas is much less than sunlight. It has, in colors, lines, mass, light, and space, its own substantive elements, and yet theorists commonly classify it as a representative art and even more commonly relegate this material to the status of an empty symbol. Its appeal is to one sense only; namely, the eye, but an eye that has been freed from some of its general habits and carefully trained into others: painting thus demands its own sense of vision and specialized interests. Through the eye, painting reaches the emotions; such emotions as may be stirred by the sheer witchery of color, the translucent play of light, the expansive sweep of space, the grace of arrangement, the detail of observation, and the mastery of large craftsmanship. We contemplate these products of the brush and wonder why their origin should have been viewed as

a mystery. That which fascinates contains its own explanation for being. If mystery exists, it lies in the result achieved amid vast natural difficulties. Painting thus has its own *substance*, laws, limitations, and capacities; hence, it has its own obvious *technique* which artists forever try to improve and elaborate. Painting also embodies many *conventions* among which are the divisions of a canvas into planes of light and of distances; and no element enters, but it is affected by them. The aims of painting are plural, but they are aims which the specific materials of painting permit within a certain margin of selection prescribed by certain specific needs in man. Thus the painting of light may be the ostensible aim of one artist; color, the more special aim of a second; drawing, the aim of a third; characterization, the aim of a fourth; and so on, through all the shades and overlapping of aims of which painting in its approved forms is susceptible. Hence, as a matter of history, not only colors and lines, but light, figures, space, modelling, atmosphere, symmetry, design, characterization, etc., also compose the *substantive* material of painting. Nor do the feelings and the ideas, associated with painting, exist wholly apart from the specific objects that engage and define them. We must not forget the laws of psychology when dazzled by art. The feelings aroused by painting are definable only within the context of its constituent aims. And the ideas that are aroused, are suggested by the constructive manipulation of the material either in its technical or in its representative character; for an artist paints with his brain as well as with his hands. Nor is color, to

take but one element of its material, a bare abstract sensation. Color for an artist is what a psychologist in his general theory describes it to be; namely, a complex product, in the determination of which many divergent psychophysical factors enter. Color is, accordingly, a thing more self-satisfying and more substantial than may, at a hasty glance, seem evident. Hence the material of painting cannot be presented in a complete divorce from an agent; nor, in the reverse view, can the feelings that are aroused by painting attain presentation when divorced from the specific material in question: every affection involves cognition and conation, and each of the latter involves the other two. Hence, painting cannot be developed in its own material requirements without compassing a corresponding development in an agent. The action is reciprocal. Painting, to be sure, may be smothered with a wholly irrelevant train of ideas and feeling; but this is vapid revery or uninformed sentimentalism. It has its foundation in ignorance, and it is as irrelevant and objectionable in art as it is in life. Art develops with and receives a contribution from the individual; but if the individual does not develop with it, he remains wholly outside the pale of art.

No more serious indictment could be directed against aesthetic theorists, then, than the fact that they fail to consider the *substance* of art, with the classification of this substance into masterpieces and shams, as their ultimate point of reference. With scarcely an exception, theorists consider art an abstract, generic something and not a definite, concrete thing. Hence they may, without fear of contradiction, call art either

anything or nothing; objectified or permanent pleasure, expression, feeling, ideas, beauty, imitation, disinterestedness, or merely an insubstantial "appearance,"—anything but that captivating group of elements, which, in their standardized forms, constitute the substance of painting, music, and poetry. Such elements, however, are the things in art which arouse our direct interest and gratification; and, because of the pure joy to be found in them, urge man to shape a given substance into such direct and cognate forms as the requirements of the material in their conjunction with certain human needs permit. We shall find the exponents of these theories, without warning, commonly slipping from an ostensible consideration of the *substance* to a consideration of other problems, sometimes legitimate, but rarely relevant. My present review shall embrace a consideration of three theories: the Hedonistic Theory, the Expression Theory, and the Experimental Theory.

## II

### THE HEDONISTIC THEORY

The Hedonistic Theory presents the claim that art has an exclusive foundation and explanation in *pleasure*. "If we say that other men should see the beauties we see, it is because we think those beauties are in the object, like its color, proportion, or size \* \* \* But a beauty not perceived is a pleasure not felt, and a contradiction."<sup>1</sup> The fundamental contentions of hedonism are (1) that beauty does not exist in an object;

<sup>1</sup>G. Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty*; pp. 44-45.

and (2) that beauty, to exist, must be perceived. The second contention is obviously a truism: a thing cannot exist for us unless it is perceived. But since this is true of experience in general, we ought not to utilize the principle to distinguish beauty in particular. Hedonists accordingly subjoin that the perception of some objects occasions pleasure, and the perception of others, pain. Beauty and art are to be included, then, among those objects which, upon perception, occasion pleasure; for "an object cannot be beautiful if it can give pleasure to nobody; a beauty to which all men were forever indifferent is a contradiction in terms."<sup>2</sup> Hence, art and beauty for them are nothing but "pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing." But hereupon we may ask, whether all objects affecting us with pleasure are objects of art or beauty? To this question we receive the reply, that "while all aesthetic phenomena are pleasurable, not all pleasures are held to be aesthetic. It seems, therefore, that it will be necessary for us to indicate the special kind of pleasures which are aesthetic, if we are to make pleasure fundamental to aesthetics. \* \* \* The problem before us then may be stated in the form of this question: What are the bounds of the aesthetic within the hedonic field."<sup>3</sup> In answering this final question, individual hedonists somewhat diverge. I shall enumerate three of their answers. Art or beauty (they do not attempt to distinguish between these terms) with Kant is a disinterested pleasure having objectivity and universality; with Marshall, "a relative permanency

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> H. R. Marshall, *Aesthetic Principles*; p. 15.

of pleasure is essential to the production of the aesthetic field;" and with Santayana, "beauty is constituted by the objectification of pleasure." I do not feel justified in entering upon a lengthy criticism of hedonism, but I shall consider it briefly, since a theory that has had and continues to have the plausibility which hedonism enjoys, even in forms sometimes only slightly disguised, must possess either some vitality or a very cleverly concealed fallacy.

The hedonists maintain, as we have seen, that there are "special kinds of pleasure which are aesthetic." This line of argument is fruitless, but I shall give it a passing recognition. The pleasure associated with a game, they would hold, is different in *kind* from the pleasure associated with art. But how is that difference in the *kind* of *pleasure* to be defined? Shall we define it by reference to its affective or its perceptive (cognitive) aspect? In its affective aspect, as is now generally accepted, pleasure differs only in degree, that is, in quantity, not in quality. Hence the qualitative differences that pleasure seems to appropriate are dependent upon its perceptive aspect. It is for this reason that we refer to different things in order to distinguish our pleasures, as, for example, music, painting, or reading. But since a hedonist makes music and painting nothing but "pleasure regarded as a quality in a thing," he, by force of his own logic is compelled to define the perceptive aspect of pleasure by an exclusive reference to its affective aspect. The circle is obvious. Hedonists like Marshall and Santayana, recognizing the dilemma, attempt a clever side-step. Thus Santayana, arguing from our tendency to objectify certain



pleasures, draws the conclusion that "beauty is pleasure regarded as a quality of a thing." In this conclusion, however, he overlooks the fact that beauty is not an abstract, generic entity, but a thing of divergent forms which no single principle can ever hope to explain. And he also overlooks the fact that the objectification of pleasure is a process that is not at all confined to objects of beauty. Such are the sad straits to which hedonism is commonly put.

But, turning to another line of argument, suppose we agree with the hedonist that an object, a sonata for instance, must be grasped (perceived and felt) before it can be beautiful. He would then have to agree with us, of course, that an inferior composition, a second sonata, for example, might also be grasped, and yet not be beautiful. But, if, when grasped, one composition is beautiful and another is ugly, how could I, the self-same being, be affected differently by two compositions if the objects themselves were not different? In what respects, then, are they unlike? The hedonist would answer, that the one affects us with pleasure and the other affects us with pain. But this is aside from the question as that point has already been admitted. We have assumed that I am the self-same being, and yet the one composition pleases while the other displeases. The difference, then, must reside in the two compositions, and this is the point that the hedonists overlook. Of course the one pleases and the other displeases; but the question now is *why* they do. We, without concern for a hedonist, can easily indicate many qualities wherein the two compositions differ. We can indi-

cate wherein the one composition, constituted as it is, stands in strict harmony with a physical organism and with a previous training in ideas, interests, and desires; and we can also indicate wherein the second composition differs most radically in these particulars from the first. We would thus find that the second composition violates principle upon principle—physical technical, and psychological. In this way and in this way only, can we ever properly inform ourselves *why* the one composition pleases and *why* the other displeases. But, in such explanation, it is necessary for us to take cognizance of several distinct things,—two compositions, a technique, certain conventions, and a complex psychophysical agent, whereas the only elements that a hedonist has at his command for a theoretical construction of this complex situation are pleasure and pain. Think of defining or creating all these things from the exclusive standpoint of pleasure and pain that admit of no difference in *kind*, except by a surreptitious assumption of the very “things” they deny!

I agree with the hedonist that a composition, which does not finally please, is not beautiful. But it is also true that an inferior composition may naturally please and a superior composition naturally displease. We avoid this paradox, however, as soon as we recognize the fact that pleasure is a function of desire, and that human desire may be transformed by such principles as are present in a superior musical composition. In this view of the matter, then, it is not pleasure that determines the merit of art, but rather art that determines through transformed desires the merit of

art, desire, and pleasure Human desire and pleasure are *not unconditioned* in their existence; they are conditioned by physiological, mechanical, and psychological principles and, in their turn, they condition other things. This action, however, is complex and reciprocal, and not the simple and one-sided affair that the hedonist would assert.

The hedonist, in his explanation of art, presents the most complete divorce between object and agent. Objects as such, in their mutual differences and relations, he does not see at all; and, of the complex psychophysical agent, he perceives nothing but pleasure and pain.

Knight, in his *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, refers to hedonism as "that theory which lies very near the lowest rung of the ladder on this subject. \* \* \* To all intents this theory is an abandonment of every attempt to theorize upon the subject."<sup>4</sup>

Hedonism, upon its own merits, may not seem to justify much respect as a theory of art. But it has the persistency of entering better company, wherein it is apt to play havoc. We shall hear of it again when we come to the Experimental Method as pounded by psychology.

### III

#### THE EXPRESSION THEORY

The theory of largest currency, no doubt, is the Expression Theory. The phrase "expression" is somewhat vague and indefinite but it ordinarily implies

<sup>4</sup>Page 85.

ideational and emotional significance. The theory embraces a variety of forms, the oldest of which, the Association Theory, presents the thesis that an object is not inherently beautiful but acquires its beauty "through a train of imagery." In the beginning of the last century, the Association Theory was proclaimed chiefly by Jeffrey and Alison, who proved to be its most aggressive champions. To-day, although the principle of association is still legitimately defended in certain forms of art-theory, as the exclusive principle it has no exponent. The modern theorists identify the term "expression" more directly with the terms "meaning" and "emotion." A work of art, they claim, presents a revelation of the mind, moods, feeling and skill of the individual artist. "It seems then that an artistic way of looking at things," writes J. C. Van Dyke, "is vitally necessary to both painting and literature \* \* \* Is there nothing else? What about the skill of hand, to which we have referred, the skill that expresses the mood or feeling and records the way of seeing? Is not that too a very important factor in the work of art or literature?" According to the Expression Theory, painting is not indicative of a direct interest in light, color, or lines; nor is music indicative of a direct interest in harmony of tone, melody, or rhythm; but painting and music are at best but a revelation or expression of the individual. Such material elements, we are told, engage our interest solely as a *means* in the revelation of mind, moods, feeling, and skill. Thus Véron writes that art is the outward manifestation, by means of lines, colors, gestures, sounds, words, of the emotions experienced by

man. With the mechanical arts, the theorists affirm, our interest is in the *thing* produced, not in the mind, moods, feeling, and skill underlying its production. Hence, in their zeal to hold fast to this distinction, they uniformly deny *in theory* that we ever directly enjoy light, color, and lines in painting, or melody, harmony, rhythm in music. For if they would once admit that painting and music are the direct objects of our enjoyment, the distinction that they enforce between the fine and the mechanical arts would vanish. In that event, the theorists would feel themselves compelled to evolve some new differentia or more amply to qualify the distinction they had already made. They adopt the beaten path, and identify the substance of art exclusively with the psychological principle.

Of the Expression Theory, several formulations are current. One of these may be defined as "self-expression." Another puts special stress upon the moods and the feelings, and is usually designated as the Emotion Theory of art. A third, which emphasizes mind, thought, or meaning, is presented in all its logical rigor by the Italian Croce, in his *Estetica*. His argument seems to be that every perception is a form of expression, since all perception involves a complex psychophysical process; and, if it is a form of expression, then every perception is unquestionably art. But, we may reply, to call everything art, is to call nothing in particular art; for art, if distinctive, presupposes the existence of certain characteristics whereby it can be shown to differ from other things. However, in his mode of reasoning, we efface not only all distinctions between art and the generality of

things, but every vestige of difference said to exist among things in general. Such a theory, in plain terms, is sheer anarchy. In its more moderate conception, the Intellectualistic Theory, as it is termed, is identified with truth or an ideational content. In none of these forms of the Expression Theory, however, do we reach beyond the point of identifying art with *self-expression*. These theories differ merely in the psychological elements selected. Their error is of one and the same texture; they make the psychological, to the exclusion of the material, the technical, and the conventional principle, the sole object of investigation. They, in common, ignore the fact that it is solely by virtue of the materials in each of the arts that we at once individualize and distinguish between them, and that our interest in the psychological principles is justified only to the extent to which it actually resolves itself into this material with its own special mechanical and conventional requirements. Put whatever emphasis we choose upon the psychological principle, we must recognize the fact that an artist can combine colors or tones only in ways that their own inherent mechanics permit. An artist, of course, may come to shape his desires in harmony with such principles, but in this case his *desires would be controlled* in a manner as conspicuous as his affirmed control over the material. But why, we may ask, does an artist at all concern himself with these elaborations in color and tone if our gratification in them is not direct and ultimate? The point I would enforce is, that the enjoyment derived from music or painting is the enjoyment of sound, or of color, or of such wholly

cognate products as either music or painting in their largest and most varied development make possible. Thus if we continued to use the phrase "expression" in connection with art, we formulate its meaning more accurately if we say that music and painting represent a most consummate exploitation (expression) of *sound* or *color* rather than an exploitation or expression of a *self*.

It is commonly accepted that to gain life we must lose it, that is, to gain the greatest amount of self-expression, we must be able to lose ourselves in things and tasks that lie outside of us. Self-expression, as the catch-word of art, could be attained, then, only in and through the most impersonal and objective attempt to bring this or that material, as sound or color, to its highest and most complete expression. If viewed in this light, the Expression Theory naturally loses its viciously subjectivistic character, and receives a new garment, which is necessary to cover its own tattered shreds, but to which, even in the broadest charity, it is not entitled. A quotation or two, I am sure, will suffice to convince the reader.

Tolstoi, an exponent of the emotional form of the Expression Theory, writes somewhat popularly to the following effect: "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to others feelings he has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves." Hirn, with a larger display of scientific authority, gives expression to the same idea: "The instinctive tendency to express over-mastering feeling \* \* \* forms the most deep-seated

motive of all human activity. We can, therefore, derive the distinctive qualities of artistic production from this impulse." A more recent writer states as his view, "that everything is beautiful [in art] in whose imaginative contemplation—or creation—man expresses or makes sensible to himself the implicit content of that active spirit which is his or in which he shares."<sup>5</sup> This is a statement of the more general form of the Expression Theory.

The claim that "the distinctive qualities of artistic production" are to be derived exclusively from "the instinctive tendency to express over-mastering feeling" is little short of grotesque. Hirn, very much like the hedonist, apparently, hopes to distill from this "tendency to express over-mastering feeling," all of that varied material and technique present in each of the arts. We must not overlook the point of vital defect in the Emotional Theory. The theorist of this school, we must remember, does not begin with the material of an art, but with an *abstract* conception of feeling. He does not say that the aim of an artist is to arouse in us such feelings as color and sound may produce, but he declares that color and sound are merely "external signs" whereby an artist "conveys to others feelings he has experienced," however foreign these may be to the feelings arousable by sound and color. In this view, the substantive nature of art evaporates. It converts itself, at best, into a necessary but superfluous symbol. Now sound and color, sometimes, may be symbolic, because music and painting also embody other material and psychological principles,

<sup>5</sup>I. F. Carritt, *The Theory of Beauty*; p. 44.



in the elaboration of which sound and color may more ostensibly serve as a means. Thus color is symbolic when "light" is our aim in painting, or tone is symbolic when rhythm is our sole aim in music. Or again, both color and light may be symbolic when representation is our more specific aim in painting. But to view all of the material of art as always subordinate to the psychological principle represents such a distortion of fact as to be scarcely conceivable. Like the Hedonistic Theory, the Emotional Theory represents subjectivism run riot.

Ruskin, in his *Modern Painters* offers a trenchant statement of the intellectualistic form of the Expression Theory. "The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass, nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought. \* \* \* But if one atom of thought has vanished, all color, all finish, all execution, all ornament, are too dearly bought. Nothing but thought can pay for thought, and the instant that the increasing refinement or finish of the picture begins to be paid for by the loss of the faintest shadow of an idea, that instant all refinement or finish is an excrescence and a deformity. \* \* \* So that, if I say that the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas, I have a definition which will include as subjects of comparison every pleasure which art is capable of conveying."\*

\* Vol. I pp. 83-84.

Ruskin tells us that "nothing but thought can pay for thought" in painting. Why, then, does he not follow the logical course that this same one-sided, ideational emphasis led Hegel to adopt, and repudiate all art in the superior qualification of science as an embodiment of thought? Ruskin does not take this step because he, the teacher and critic of art, loved painting too dearly to follow in actual practice the one-sided injunction of his faulty theory. Instead, he writes volumes upon volumes exalting this or that material aspect of art, and he appraises art exclusively from this standpoint. From the finished product of art, we may, of course, refer to the calibre of mind or sensibility that produced it. But it is the *product* that justifies this reference; and it is justified only to the extent to which the thought or sensibility of the artist translated itself into something that is neither thought nor sensibility, but some form of a material perfection. We must not confound the legitimate aims and interests of psychology with those of art; for we do not enlarge, but deplete our range of experience by making of art a pure instance of psychological introspection. In fact, we are not even legitimate psychologists if we, by an abstract conception of thought or feeling, violate the injunction of the psychic triad.

But if feeling and ideation cannot by themselves constitute the substance of art, neither (to continue our illustration) can sound or color when too narrowly conceived. One of the central doctrines of psychology in recent years has been the triadic conception of the psychic unit. This conception is that every idea or sensation, although primarily cognitive, is also affec-

It is a fair  
end of it.

tive (involving feeling and emotion) and conative (involving movement and volition). Stated in another way, it contains the thought that a man perceives not with an impassive, mathematical eye or ear, but with his whole psychophysical self. We do not, therefore, exhaust the substantive nature of an art unless the perceptive aspect of its material is brought into correlation with the other two aspects of the triadic unit. Not until then can we be said to have in color the substantive value it has for painting, and in tone the substantive value it has for music. Experimental psychology has done much in the field of aesthetics to open up this phase of the subject.

#### IV

#### THE EXPERIMENTAL THEORY

The Experimental Theory of art has its distinctive value in the aim to measure the affective, motor, and associational factors present in the perception of color, tone, and other elements of music and painting. The error of the Experimental theorists lies in their failure properly to estimate their results, admirable as they are, from the standpoint of art and beauty. Their aim, which they fail to accomplish, is an explanation of *beauty* in art; their achievement, which they curiously overlook, is the establishment of the fact that painting and music are more *substantive* in their nature than is commonly supposed. Before engaging in any criticism, however, it is necessary to state the theory.

The Experimental Theory begins with an analysis of an art product into its elements. It resolves painting,

for example, into lines and color, and music into tones and rhythm. These elements, either singly or in restricted combination, it then subjects to certain lines of experimentation and inquiry. "The experiences with which aesthetic experiments deal," an exponent of this method writes, "are not merely part of wider and fuller impressions such as those realized before works of the different arts. But, however, intrinsically unimportant the object may be, they are complete although simplified aesthetic experiences. The explanatory value of experiments does not only consist in accounting for the effects of lines and colors, sounds and rhythms, in so far as they may be combined into the total effect of a picture, or a piece of music. \* \* \* Their value lies in the light which they throw upon aesthetic experience in general, which they represent, so to speak, in miniature."<sup>7</sup>

Edward Bullough, in an admirable group of articles,<sup>8</sup> isolates four general viewpoints in our perception of color: the *objective* view, which is based upon some physical characteristic of color, i. e., saturation, brightness, or purity; the *physiological* view, which is based upon a physiological property in colors, i. e., warm, cold, exciting, or reposeful; the *associational* view, based upon the effect of the principle of association in affecting color; and, lastly, the *character* view, whereby colors are affirmed to have different characters, i. e., mild, sober, jovial, treacherous, etc. Feré has already given support to the same general idea in his claim that colors differ in their dynamogenic

<sup>7</sup> British Journal of Psychology, Vol. III, pp. 446-447.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Vol. II and III.

power, and, from this standpoint, "could be classed in a certain order which appeared to be: red, orange, green, yellow, and blue." Colors as thus perceived, are obviously the joint product of several factors present in their perception, and far more substantive in their nature than commonly imagined.

Colors also affect us as being heavier or lighter. "The weight idea of color is unreflective and as immediate as in the case of a stone. It is most marked when it is relative; i. e., when it is the result of the weight differences between two colors seen side by side. But it also exists absolutely; that is, in face of only one color. \* \* \* A golden yellow looks light, and it is, as an aesthetic reality, cheerful, energizing. A rich blue looks heavy, and it is serious, even depressing."

Writing of specific colors, Bullough says: "The character of red or a tone tinged with red is usually of a sympathetic, affectionate kind, it appears to come to you with openness and frankness. Red is by far the most active color, and exhibits degrees of energy which are almost overwhelming. It has been described as gushing, and it is impressive by reason of its irresistible strength and power."

Bullough's characterization of red is sustained by the observation and opinion of many other investigators. Thus Havelock Ellis calls red the most emotional of colors. All agree that it is an expression of joy, energy and activity.

"Yellow is of the essence of cheerfulness and lightness of heart. Yellow is happiness, sunshine, and fun. It is almost impossible to take it seriously. Even when it tries to appear serious and deepens into gold, it

retains too much of its joyous radiance to be grand and majestic. It may be a splendid brilliant, but its splendor is after all merely on its surface and a faint suspicion of shallowness is apt to linger in the mind."

In the light of such complexity in the character of colors, to which I have but briefly referred, it is not at all surprising that individuals should manifest likes and dislikes in respect to particular colors. Association is in part responsible for this influence; but, as has been shown, "colors affect us in a way that extends even to the stimulation of the muscular and circulatory systems."<sup>9</sup> As a result, the experimental method devotes considerable space to a statistical tabulation of color-preference under varying conditions within colors, and with both children and adults. The idea underlying the inquiry is, that preference in color is a measure of its beauty, but this, as we shall see, is wholly erroneous from the standpoint of art.

Thus far we have discussed merely the element of *color*; but the same conclusions are advanced in regard to *lines*; their apprehension also involves "not only motor memories and impulses but numberless ideal associations, and these associations constitute a line as truly as do the others."<sup>10</sup> In other words, every impression also involves a complex expression. *Symmetry* in painting draws forth a similar type of explanation; it is asserted to have its foundation "in the system of energies of our bilateral organism."<sup>11</sup> The matter of *rhythm* too, has been probed from many a

<sup>9</sup>C. W. Valentine, *Experimental Psychology of Beauty*; p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>E. D. Puffer, *The Psychology of Beauty*; p. 116.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 110.

psychophysical angle, although none of the conclusions that are offered are really final. Less has been done in the field of music than in that of painting, but such a deficiency is easily remedied. This, in brief, is the method championed by experimental psychologists in the field of aesthetics. Let us now find the relation between this method and the problem of art.

The Experimental Theory makes two distinct contributions of inestimable value to aesthetic thought. It draws attention to the materials of art; and it offers an analysis of this material in its close correlation with a psychophysical agent. But with all due praise rendered, it remains to be said that the Experimental Theory presents defects and omissions, so serious, that its growth of necessity is stunted and sporadic. I shall touch upon five of the defects and show their bearing upon the special problem of this chapter.

In the first place, the exponents of the Experimental Method confuse the problem of substance with that of beauty. Furthermore, in their explanation of beauty, they of necessity slip from the circumscribed scope of the principles underlying their method to the unconscious adoption of principles more or less foreign or irrelevant. Then, they analyze both the art-product and the agent incompletely. Lastly, they consider inadequately the technical, conventional or constructive side of art. I shall discuss these five points in the order given.

## 1

The exponents of this method curiously confuse the problem of art's *beauty* with the problem of art's *sub-*

*stance.* The fact that lines, symmetry, colors, or rhythm have a psychophysical foundation does not prove that they have beauty: all perception has the same foundation, whether aesthetic or non-aesthetic. Nor does a "preference" for one line or color over another prove that it is more beautiful: "preference" is exhibited in the non-aesthetic as well as in the aesthetic sphere of human experience. But even if both tenets were true, their bearing upon the beauty of art is without relevancy: beauty of art is no mere aggregation of psychophysical elements, however beautiful in themselves. The only thing established in this consideration of elements, is the fact that art, in virtue of its psychophysical basis, possesses a more *substantive* reality than is ordinarily supposed. Beauty in art is determined from the standpoint of art's history and general aims, and *not* from the standpoint of its isolated elements, except as these embody themselves in the technique and conventions. This limitation of the method is partly recognized by some of its exponents. But our criticism extends to their practice of identifying the elements themselves with the idea of beauty. They should not maintain, as has been quoted, that these elements are "aesthetic experiences in miniature," unless they stand ready to convert their method into an outright adoption of hedonism.

The one fact that the usual formulation of this method enforces, is that apprehension is a more complex process than had been previously admitted. But you cannot make this process yield something more peculiar in the field of aesthetics than it is able to produce in the general field of perception. In general



perception, the method enables us more fully to describe the total nature of an object from the standpoint of its relation to a complex psychophysical agent. When, as a method, it is also introduced into the field of art, it can produce neither more nor less. Hence my conclusion is, that the psychologist wholly misconstrues his problem when, in the present form of his theory, he makes beauty rather than the substance of art his professed aim.

## 2

As a result of this limitation, different writers, in order to buttress their claims as *aesthetic* theorists, have taken refuge in certain supplementary principles. But, in these supplementations, they make no additional analysis of the work of art *per se*; rather, they revert to principles that are either new and psychological or old and abstract.

The Einfühlung Theory, which represents a supposedly novel edition of the Experimental Method under the guise of a new principle, has been expounded in a slightly modified form by several theorists.<sup>12</sup> It states that we "transport, project or enter into" the objects we contemplate, and that we then experience "a tendency to attribute human activities, nay, movements to visible shapes." This tendency the theorists consider "the principal explanation of the pleasure and displeasure accompanying aesthetic con-

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<sup>12</sup> Among the exponents of this theory, Theodore Lipps is most eminent; while Karl Groos, Lee and Thomson, and others are relatively independent.

templation of such visible shapes.”<sup>13</sup> Like the Experimentalists, these theorists tell us “that aesthetic perception of visible shapes is agreeable or disagreeable because it involves alternations in great organic functions, principally respiratory and equilibratory, which are themselves accompanied by feelings of more or less well-being or the contrary.”<sup>14</sup>

From this statement, it is easy to perceive that, if the *Einfühlung* Theory differs in any way from the general form of the Experimental Method, it differs in the fact that it emphasizes the *process* rather than the *product* incident to the psychophysical principle. Hence our criticism of it remains the same: a process that is common to all experience cannot be exclusively utilized in defining a specific form of experience, namely, beauty. And to the extent to which it emphasizes the product rather than the process, it reverts bodily into the general form of the Experimental Theory.

It is interesting, however, to note the ease with which either form of the theory reverts to hedonism. Beauty, as may be observed from the above extracts, is not the inevitable resultant of self-projection; it is not even the inevitable resultant of self-projection plus the psychophysical principle. For beauty to exist, pleasure in some form must also be present. But, in this union of the three principles, we have nothing that does not as readily apply to a non-aesthetic as to an aesthetic perception. Thus the old problem, in a form somewhat disguised, is again

<sup>13</sup> Lee and Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

thrust upon our attention: What *kind* of pleasure constitutes beauty? And there we are, exactly where hedonism in art long since planted us! A pleasure of the kind called aesthetic is not to be distinguished because united with self-projection or the psychophysical principle: all three of these principles are admittedly present in all perception. Hence, whether we take these principles in their separation or in their conjunction, we reach the same result: they can neither in their separation nor in their union characterize an aesthetic experience.

Another supplementation of the Experimental Method is presented in the claim that Beauty in color or line is the product of a "favorable stimulation of the eye."<sup>15</sup> This principle made its greatest headway in the study of lines, and under the influence for which Hogarth in his "Analysis of Beauty" is directly responsible. On this point, however, psychologists themselves pronounce "that our pleasure in looking at lines and figures is not due to the actual sensations due to the movements of the eyes."<sup>16</sup> Yet, when the principle of "favorable stimulation" is invoked, it is necessary to show in psychophysical detail just how and wherein a given stimulus is more in harmony with the general structure of the psychophysical agent than some other possible stimulus could be. As a general thing, they overlook the fact that a mental structure may be as ultimate as a physical structure in determining "favorable stimulation." The only mental factors they usually consider are association and

<sup>15</sup>E. D. Puffer, *The Psychology of Beauty*; p. 93.

<sup>16</sup>C. W. Valentine, *Experimental Psychology of Beauty*; p. 46.

affection; and they do not, of course, even so much as intimate such a complex psychic process as could make a style of art agreeable to one, disagreeable to another, and a mere blank to a third. On the physical side, they carry out "favorable stimulation" in a fashion even more crude, inferring it by the absence or presence of pleasure, instead of directly observing it. "Favorable stimulation" demands, however, that we argue, not from pleasure to harmony between a given stimulus and a psychophysical structure but from harmony to pleasure. Hence pleasure and not "favorable stimulation" is their actual criterion. Thus we read in the writings of one of the exponents: "It is widely admitted that, in general, the enjoyment of beauty is accompanied by pleasure, and in particular the pleasure aspect is especially predominant when we are concerned with such elements as color, lines, etc."<sup>17</sup> But if "pleasure" be insisted upon as "especially predominant," we have a plain re-instatement of hedonism; and if "favorable stimulation" be also insisted upon as the ultimate, we have "a house divided against itself." In his confusion, an experimental psychologist may even slip away from both principles and, with Miss Puffer, define beauty "as that combination of qualities in an object which brings a union of stimulation and repose in the enjoyer."<sup>18</sup> In a word, we began the psychophysical experimental method as a solo, developed a duet, and wind up in a trio, or, in some cases, even in a chorus of divergent psychological principles, but with no attempt ever made to incorpor-

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> E. D. Puffer; p. 93.

ate the material, conventional, and technical principles. As for the material principle, so promising with the psychologist in its initial appearance, that too is lost in this general welter of half-digested principles, abstract and subjective.

Several errors contribute in neutralizing the results of this method: an adherence to a generic conception of beauty and art; a failure to apply the perceptive aspect of the psychic triad; and a neglect to distinguish between the beauty and the substance of art. Hence I repeat: what the experimental method in any of its forms openly avows, it fails to prove; namely, beauty. What it fails to avow is the one thing of significance that it does prove; namely, that the elements of art are more substantive in nature than is commonly supposed.

## 3

The experimental method, when properly reconstructed, can be made to yield a contribution to art-theory from the standpoint of art's substance. The contribution, notwithstanding, remains incomplete for two specific reasons. In the first place, psychologists in the present form of their theory do not adequately analyze the art-product. The few elements that they examine do not even begin to exhaust the full substantive nature of art as it exists for an artist or a connoisseur. Thus painting is a woven complex of many constituent aims, as space, light, texture, atmosphere, design, modelling in light and shade; whereas some of the rudiments of lines, colors, and symmetry, represent the only things in painting that

have in the main been seized upon by the experimentalist. Moreover, such elements, as we shall see in detail in the chapter on painting, undergo constant change in their value through their interrelation. Of what avail, then, is an inquiry into the beauty of isolated color, when "the immediate effect of individual colors is modified as soon as it enters as an element into such a complicated object as a picture." Such modifications, however, may increase the *substantive* character of an element even while they may neutralize its value as an element of direct *beauty*. But the neutralization of its beauty is all that could enforce itself upon their minds; hence their confession that beauty of isolated color is "art in miniature." Such statements, however, represent a last desperate effort of experimentalists to save their method from the just bankruptcy confronting it.<sup>19</sup> For now it merely remains to add, that the beauty of these isolated elements also resists determination at their hands, because of their devotion to a generic conception of beauty and because of their exclusive adherence to a "hedonic preference," either by itself or in conjunction with other purely subjective principles. I have already shown in the first chapter the necessity for correlating beauty with the material aspect of things.

## 4

The experimental method, it is said, is dominantly analytical, and, for this reason, theorists have fre-

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<sup>19</sup> Miss Puffer represents an exception in her admirable analysis of symmetry as concretely exhibited in works of art.

quently tried to palliate some of the defects just noted. They think it their business, not to build up an art-product out of the elements, but merely to examine them, and, by determining their beauty in their isolated simplicity, to conclude, I presume, that a work of art is a mere mosaic or aggregation of them. But I have shown that the method, although dominantly analytical, is not sufficiently so in respect to the full substance of an art-product. It now remains to show that their theory is also lacking in the analysis of the psychology underlying art. Since committed by psychologists, the latter defect, naturally, is not without its humor.

A work of art has its origin and foundation in part in the conative aspect of man's nature, as, for example, in his desire for the comic, the mysterious, the dramatic, and for stimulation and expression of the most varied character. Hence the value or significance (the substance) of an art-product cannot be wholly determined by means of a psychology dealing with an art-product merely from the stand-point of a non-conative perception. The experimental theorists, in their psychology, exhibit the passive rather than the active relation of an agent to his art-product, even though they rightly incorporate certain affective and associative elements. The dictum usually invoked is: Impression demands expression; but the experimentalist fails to translate, in terms other than physical or motor, affective or associational, the conative elements here implied. Hence they really fail to incorporate a dictum of equal importance to art, or even to a proper evaluation of a line or color from a psycholog-

ical standpoint; namely, that a *desire* translates its direct form or fulfillment into an impression, so to speak, in virtue of which fact a given element of perception acquires an enhanced value and significance. Let me illustrate my meaning. Art is in large measure a matter of specially cultivated tastes, so that one group of individuals may have as keen a desire for art in its complexity of constituent aims as another may have for wine, beer, or athletic sports. Hence the full value of such elements in art could not be tried out or tested except upon such subjects as possess this order of specially trained faculties and desires. How absurd, therefore, most of the experiments in this field must seem when conducted, as they are, upon the assumption that man's structure in perception is fundamentally uniform, except for the variations, so faithfully recorded, in his ordinary motor and associational reactions. As well say that bread has the same value for the hungry as for the satiated individual, or that a book has the same value for a babe or an illiterate man as for a scholar. A psychology that ignores the direct effect of the volitional factor in determining a perception is a psychology that has not yet fully achieved and incorporated the psychic-triad in its application to art. We may conclude that not only an art-product, but even the constituent elements of an art, possess from the conative standpoint a fuller reality than the Experimental Method, with its present psychology left uncorrected, is able to supply.

Hirn, in his *Origins of Art*, although in defense of a very different thesis, has brought together several psychological facts that readily lend themselves to



our present purpose. One of these is the fact of man's natural craving for sense-stimulation and his inherent dread of insensibility: "the absence of sensation and function frightens us by its similarity to what we fear more than pain. \* \* \* We even long for suffering and pain as a means of escaping the dullness, emptiness, and darkness of insensibility."<sup>20</sup> Hirn quotes the following statement by Professor Lange: "It is a condition of our well-being that our sensorial centres should be in a certain degree of activity, called forth by the impressions which reach them through the sensorial nerves from the outside. If from some cause or other—for instance, from a decrease in the functional powers of these centres—there arises an insensibility, anaesthesia, then we feel a longing to force them to their usual activity by addressing to them an abnormally strong appeal, or, in other words, by intensifying the external impression and thereby neutralizing the insensibility." This order of truth assumes a less pathological form if illustrated from the arts. A painter may seek the production of light; he may seek to revel in it as if it were the acme of life's experience. A musician may strive after rhythm or harmony in tone. A poet may compass the comic or the romantically mysterious. Their desires may be most varied and insistent. But the stronger the desire, the more is its object enhanced in actual value. Art, like most forms of approved civilized life, demands special training and education. It engenders new needs and transforms or deepens old ones. Hence art may become a living, throbbing reality for

<sup>20</sup> Page 65.

many, even while for others it may represent only so much dead weight. In an attempt properly to evaluate science, would you turn to the scoffing and indifferent, or to the man whose native curiosity has been kept alive and developed by long and careful study? So it is with art. To attempt to gauge its full substantive value, you must turn, in selecting candidates for the much-vaunted Experimental Method, to the artist or the connoisseur, not, as is usually done, to the artistically uninformed. The Experimental Theory, therefore, sadly needs correction, even in its psychology, before it dare present itself as a workable theory of *art*.

## 5

Many of the contributions made by the experimentalists come under the subject of art's technique rather than that of art itself. Of this class are those investigations, physiological and psychological, that exhibit certain rules or statistics in the combination of lines, colors, or sounds. Artists themselves, however, have gone so far beyond psychologists in these matters as to make the sporadic contributions of the latter, in the light of their misconceived aims, look ridiculous. It would indeed be a sad day for art, if the artists ceased with their own experimentation on the strength of a mere promise held forth by present-day psychologists.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle, whose subject was the more elusive one of the drama, made better use of a similar method.

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<sup>21</sup>I shall enlarge upon this point in Chapter VI.

His resolution of the drama into its elements was far more exhaustive than the analysis of painting or music by the psychologist; and he achieved something which they never so much as even attempted, since he propounded the constructive or synthesizing principles whereby these elements are again woven into an artistic whole. Such constructive principles, however, are to be attained only where the constituent elements of an art are studied in their reciprocal relation, and estimated from the standpoint of the general aims of that art, and from the standpoint of an artistically tutored psychophysical individual.

## CHAPTER V

### Formulas and Methods in Art-Theory

The formulas of art as commonly presented are concerned with three points,—its nature, its origin, and its value. History has given larger prominence to these problems in their separation than the facts would seem to justify; but when dealing with matters of history, we must accept a situation as presented. Aesthetics as it exists today is a big name for ideas so anaemic that I marvel at their longevity.

#### I

#### THE NATURE OF ART

The problem of art's nature entails the simple matter of its description. But since the history of this subject is entangled, among other errors, with the generic notion of art, much confusion will assail us at every stage of its orthodox treatment. The proper solution of the question demands first and foremost a description of art's material, technical, conventional, and psychological substance in forms critically and historically approved; but art in its generic form has no specific substance. How, then, has the usual theorist solved the insolvable?

#### THE "MIND-BORN" CONCEPTION

In the contrast frequently set up between art and nature, the contention emerges that "art is the beauty

that is born of the mind; and by as much as the mind and its products are higher than nature and its appearance, by so much the beauty of art is higher than the beauty of nature."<sup>1</sup> This statement implies that art is dominantly a form of creation; and the fact of creation is supposed to explain both the substance of art and its peculiar charm. That is, art has no intrinsic substance but that of creation. But since the mechanical arts, also, exhibit human creation, it would follow that we either group the mechanical with the fine arts, or distinguish them more minutely.

In the supplementary form of the argument it is held that art involves not merely creation, but genius: art is the product or fruit of inspiration. "This notion became specially prominent in Germany in the so-called *epoch of genius*, which was introduced by the early poetical productions of Goethe, and subsequently sustained by those of Schiller."<sup>2</sup> But the intended supplementation in no way advances the inquiry; in fact, it merely diverts the attention from the *object* of art to its underlying psychology. Moreover, theorists soon discovered that things other than art, as science, for example, also involve genius. In this predicament, theorists sometimes associate the element of creation with a so-called art-impulse or taste. Neither of these views, however, carries us beyond the former error. They alike imply the conclusion that the peculiar substance of art is revealed not in its own special, fourfold material, but in an hypostasized psychological entity.

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Fine Art*; trans. by B. Bosanquet.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The "mind-born" attribute of art assumes a more concrete form when identified with technical excellence. While no one would deny that technical excellence enters as a factor in the structure of art, most of us would emphatically deny that it is restricted to art, or that it constitutes the sole element of enjoyment. Craftsmanship is most commendable in its wise concealment; for the crucial demand in art is a *material* result and not a noisy testimony of the process whereby the result was achieved, unless a knowledge of the process throws the material result into more significant relief. Statements such as these are bare truisms. Yet we read, *ad nauseam*, that "art is primarily a matter of doing, somewhat a matter of seeing and feeling."<sup>3</sup> If one takes such statements at face value, one would think that, after all, art is not as theorists with equal emphasis proclaim, an "end in itself," but a pure, direct, and undiluted reflection of the psychological man,—*his* glorification, rather than the glorification of such concrete things as color, light, space, modelling, atmosphere, tone, harmony, melody, and rhythm. Of course, work well done is bound to reflect glory upon the doer; but this glory is attained by pointing specifically to the thing achieved instead of pointing to an individual. Yet many art-theories have been reared upon this flimsy construction of facts.

#### PERFECTION

The identification of art with perfection has a long and tenacious history. "Good painting," writes Mich-

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<sup>3</sup>J. C. Van Dyke, *Art for Art's Sake*.

ael Angelo, "is noble and devout in itself, for, with the wise, nothing elevates more the soul and turns it towards devotion than the difficulty of perfection, which is a tendency to approach God and to be united to Him. Good painting is a copy of His Perfection, a shadow of His Brush." Michael Angelo implies that perfection is a positive entity. This term, however, is a bare abstraction dependent for its meaning upon some specific thing. It is, moreover, a term of large use beyond as well as within the sphere of art. If perfection, then, is to be assigned a proper use within the sphere of art, it would be necessary to ask: *what*, brought to perfection, constitutes art?

To begin with, perfection in art is not single or unitary, but plural. In music it may be found in melody, harmony, rhythm; in painting, it may be found in color, design, line, or representation; and so with each of the different arts. Brought to its perfection, a certain concrete thing pleases. But it is the concrete thing that pleases, not a divorced perfection. Perfection, then, can never be a character of art in its generic sense, since art in the generic sense has no specific material. Hence the term perfection, in the meaning commonly employed by art-theorists, has no reality. It is in this general use a bare term of discursive thought.

### BEAUTY

The same line of reasoning applies to the equally general tendency to identify art with beauty, a tendency which has already been fully discussed in a previous chapter. These two terms of discursive thought,

beauty and perfection, have given wing in art-theory to much rhapsody.

I admit that craftsmanship, beauty, and perfection, when properly construed, present fundamental characteristics of art. Their proper construction, however, implies the existence of certain materials as more peculiar and fundamental to the nature of art.

#### DISINTERESTEDNESS

Art is said to be the natural product of a disinterested non-utilitarian viewpoint. This position is so widely held that I tremble at the thought of exposing its fiction. "Metaphysicians as well as psychologists, Hegelians as well as Darwinians, all agree in declaring that a work or performance, which can be proved to serve any utilitarian, non-aesthetic interest must not be considered as a genuine work of art. True art has its one end in itself, and rejects every extraneous purpose; that is the doctrine which, with more or less explicitness, has been stated by Kant, Schiller, Spencer, Hennequin, Grosse, Grant Allen, and others. And popular opinion agrees in this respect with the conclusions of science."<sup>4</sup>

Disinterestedness is clearly defined in the following passage: "A beautiful woman if living would no doubt please us as much and rather more than an equally beautiful woman seen in painting; but what makes the former please men more is her not being an independent appearance. In the painting, life must only attract as an appearance, and reality as an idea. But

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<sup>4</sup>Yrjö Hirn, *The Origins of Art*, p. 7.



it is certain that to feel in a living object only the pure appearance, requires a much higher aesthetic culture;" it demands "more power of abstraction, freedom of heart, and energy of will than man requires" in the contemplation of reality; "and he must have left the latter behind him if he wishes to attain to aesthetic appearance. \* \* \* Consequently, when we find in man the signs of a pure and disinterested esteem, we can infer that this revolution has taken place in his nature, and that humanity has really begun in him."<sup>5</sup>

The issue is clearly presented. A "living woman" *becomes* an object of aesthetic contemplation as soon as man "begins to prefer form to substance and to risk reality for appearance;" whereas a "woman in painting" *ceases* to be an object of art if, in our contemplation of the painting, we do not prefer form to substance or appearance to reality. Any object, we are told, when properly viewed, becomes "an appearance," whereas a work of art, not properly viewed, ceases to be "an appearance." This theory contains an element of truth that conceals its extremely radical character. It enforces the claim that nothing is an art in its own right; but anything may become an art when viewed as "an appearance." Yet what is "an appearance?" The answer is: whatever evokes "a pure and disinterested esteem." The issue should be carefully noted: it is not said that art is of such a structure that it enjoins "a pure and disinterested esteem," but the reverse; namely, that a "disinterested esteem" confers upon an object, whatever its structure, the character of art.

<sup>5</sup>Schiller, Ueber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen, Briefe XXVI, XXVII.

What are we to say of this statement in the face of its authoritative backing? In the first place, it is obvious that art in its generic meaning has no substance, and the *negative* idea of "disinterestedness" leaves the generic notion of art emptier than it was. If, on the other hand, we abandon the generic for a concrete conception of art, the substance of each art would be different. But, it may be answered, that disinterestedness, notwithstanding, is a characteristic that each of the arts possesses in addition to its own special substance. I accept this issue for further examination. I shall consider it from the standpoints of art and psychology.

The first question I shall raise is this: What is there in art to make disinterestedness so conspicuous a trait? My answer is that the most dominant of the arts—painting, music, and poetry—are not tri-dimensional. Obviously, then, no *objective* relation can be set up between them and other tri-dimensional things. Even the sculptor, we are told, "is forced to base his tri-dimensional conception on a visual or pictorial conception and to lay out his work with this only in view."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, art is specially created for sensuous and ideational enjoyment,—an aim that has developed out of its own restricted range of interest and material. In these two characteristics, then, the peculiar secret of art's so-termed disinterestedness stands revealed. But this restriction in the scope of art's relations in no way determines its nature or substance. At its best, the restriction expresses merely an *accidental* limitation; not a characteristic of art

<sup>6</sup>Adolf Hildebrand, *Problem of Form*, p. 126.

that is peculiar or fundamental. In fact, if the one distinguishing mark of art were a *negative* disinterestedness, its substance would be reduced to zero,—a condition true enough, perhaps of the generic notion of art, but certainly false of the concrete arts. No object can satisfy all of the many human interests; and no object is so devoid of parts as not to satisfy at least some few human interests. Art, in these respects, is no exception. Art satisfies many deep human interests, but it cannot, of course, satisfy all of them. Yet, because it cannot feed, clothe, and house us, we call it disinterested, and, further, make this quality the sole characteristic of art. In such crude, illogical, and unexpected ways does man's stomach, alas, affect his vision. Craftsmanship and perfection are fundamental characteristics of art; disinterestedness is an external accident and of no distinctive pertinency. When, for example, we attend a concert, do we go to enjoy the music or to enjoy a sense of disinterestedness? To be sure, the enjoyment of music takes place within the periphery of each auditor; yet what difference could this restriction produce in the *nature* of music? In fact, if I could extract this fleeting phenomenon from within my periphery and, on my return home, pass it around to my friends and family, there is every reason to believe that it would occasion an enhanced rather than a decreased value. But the reason why I am thus circumscribed in my enjoyment, is not that music by virtue of this restriction in use is *art*, but because music as constituted makes this sort of general exchange impossible.

But it may be held that I confuse the issue. I accept the accusation. Suppose, then, that we view the matter from the standpoint of art for art's sake. The assertion is that art must be enjoyed for its own sake and not for the sake of something else.<sup>1</sup> In a sense this conclusion is but a corollary of the previous one; namely, that art, in virtue of its natural restriction, cannot be put to a use that is naturally inhibited; and, in that part of its meaning that would still remain, art does not differ from many other things of life which, too, must be enjoyed for their own sake, even though they, like art, may also have other beneficent or pernicious consequences; and, in this meaning, it is as appropriate to speak of life for life's sake, or science for the sake of science, or work for work's sake, or love for love's sake, as to speak of art for art's sake. In this aspect of the question, we deal with the plain facts of psychology. It is to these that I shall now turn.

To begin with, disinterestedness is not restricted to art. An object of any character whatsoever may wholly engross our attention and activity to the exclusion of all else. Disinterestedness, therefore, in

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<sup>1</sup> "In looking at an apple or a peach, the ordinary point of view would be that of possession or consumption. But we may for the time consider in them only the beauty of form and colour. Then the graceful rondure of the apple, the delicate curves in the peach, the glistening surface, the bright side fading by soft gradations into the sea-green of the one, the soft texture of the surface, the crimson and purple of the other, may give us pure delight. And this pleasure is playful and disinterested, and has nothing to do with possession or consumption. Nay, these considerations would disturb and counteract the artistic mood which the aesthetic perception produces in us."—Charles Waldstein, *The Study of Art in Universities*.

this meaning of the term, is a recognized fact of *general* experience; for every interest in its natural tendency, as psychology so abundantly informs, is monopolistic. That an object of a non-utilitarian aspect should chance to interest, is, also, neither mysterious nor confined to art. Why does a man smoke, or a woman submit herself to the tyranny of an absurd fashion (I refrain from enlarging the list of non-utilitarian interests) if practical utility were our sole rule or norm of action? In fact, if the utilitarian standard were as ultimate as affirmed, ethnologists would never have been able to write "that all hunting peoples are much more richly and carefully decorated than clothed. \* \* \* They are content to be naked, but ambitious to be fine."<sup>7</sup> Man's actions in general have anything but a sun-clear, utilitarian basis. Hence Voltaire has more wisely observed of man: What so essential to life as the superfluous? The conclusion is evident: Disinterestedness, in the big role assigned to it in art by modern theorists, represents the most egregious piece of fiction and the most pathetic confusion of problems. They attempt by means of a negative term of false or of no connotation to describe the character and substance of art.

#### THE METHOD UNDERLYING ART-THEORIZING

It is time that we became more fully acquainted with a method which, in connection with the generic notion, is conducive to such aberrations as we have just traced. The method, in fact, is outworn, and

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<sup>7</sup> Ernst Grosse, *Beginnings of Art*, p. 237.

nearly every other science, except aesthetics, has long since abandoned it.

The aesthetic theorist commonly deals with an undefined, generic notion of art which he seeks to particularize by referring to the arts in their plural and undiscriminated forms; and he selects such traits in them as may serve to determine their common character. He does not, as the inductive method properly demands, exhaustively analyze each of the many divergent arts and compare them. Instead, he compares his vague and undefined notion of the divergent arts with nature, science, religion, morality, or the mechanical arts. What he seeks, in this misguided comparison, is art's *differentia*,—some characteristic wherein art appears radically different from everything else in the universe. He also presupposes that our meaning of nature, science, religion, morality, and the mechanical arts is perfectly clear and unequivocal. In a word, he seeks in relative darkness to attain the absolutely unattainable.

Art, to begin with, could not possess a *differentia* if it did not exist in some form or other. But, to exist, a complex thing must have certain characteristics. Hence to ask what the fundamental *characteristics* of a thing are, is one form of question. To ask what a thing's *differentia* is, is another question. By the first, we are put in a position favoring a progressive determination of a thing's nature or substance. By the second, we end our inquiry as soon as we have satisfied our minds that in this or that respect, however trivial or accidental, art differs from everything else; for it is a natural consequence that, in our ignorance of the more particular characteristics of the divergent arts,

we should affirm that art is one with the affirmed differentia. Such, at least, is the method which long usage and time have enshrined as *the* method in aesthetic theories.

This method holds in solution the gravest kind of fallacies. It assumes, in the first place, that a thing can possess a quality by virtue of which it can be completely differentiated from everything else. But there is no such quality in any complex thing. Name any quality of any object we choose, there would be no trouble to duplicate it in a myriad of other objects. It is a commonplace that a given thing, in certain of its qualities, is *like* some objects and *unlike* many others. A red tie, for example in point of color, is unlike a white rose, although it is in this respect like a red rose. We can never find a quality in anything that would constitute of it an absolute differentia. Thus art may be *unlike* a machine in many respects and *like* it in many others; and in the points in which art differed from a machine, it would resemble many other objects. How, then, are we ever to determine *the* differentia of art? A thing, obviously, is not unique in virtue of any single quality; and to talk of an "essence" in art, is to revive an exploded form of rationalism. If a thing is unique, it is unique solely in virtue of the fact that it combines or unites a *different complexity of qualities* from other things. It is in this way only that we can hope ever to assert a difference between the red tie and the red rose; and it is the only way in which we may hope ever to distinguish art from a machine. There is no object in this universe, however unique in seeming, that does not shade off from or on to some other particular objects.

Complex things, such as the divergent arts, must, therefore, be more fully particularized before we even so much as possess a basis in a process of differentiation. But—and here is the second confusion—a fundamental characteristic of an object, and an element of differentiation, are not of necessity one and the same thing. A red tie differs from a white rose in point of color; but this difference between them is exceedingly trivial. A differentia may, of course, denote a fundamental characteristic of a thing; but there is no guarantee in the logical operation of this method that the differentia will be profound instead of trivial. In fact, the method invites the very opposite result. The determination of an object, in general, is dependent upon the things with which we relate and compare it. But a method that, in principle, enjoins an *extra* rather than *intra* relation or comparison, emphasizes the irrelevant rather than the relevant relations. In a word, the method, in principle, favors the discovery of the trivial rather than the fundamental in art. A differentia, brought into prominence at any time, is wholly dependent upon the chance and accidental relation. Hence, in what follows, as in what preceded, it is necessary in a review of art-theories to distinguish sharply between a mere differentia and a fundamental characteristic. The central problem, therefore, resolves itself into an attempt more fully and accurately to determine the characteristics that in their unique complexity constitute art.

In order to set forth more completely the formulas commonly presented, I shall review an additional two with a meaning more specifically centered upon the



nature or substance of art. As for the formulas already surveyed, they have all shown themselves irrelevant to the problem they were intended to solve.

#### MEANING IN SENSUOUS FORM

The material of art recognized in general theory, is of a fourfold character, material proper, as tones and color; abstract qualities, as harmony, unity, and symmetry; psychological elements, as feeling and ideas; and what may be termed subject-matter or meaning. Under the term "substance," I embrace all these forms. Thus the substance of painting resolves itself, roughly, into colors, lines, a certain constructive unity, and meaning; and music, into tones, rhythm, harmony, a certain constructive unity, and meaning. Such, apparently, are the facts, briefly formulated; and, thus considered, they make it easy to understand why the differentia of art should have been so widely identified with "meaning in sensuous form."

But this formula, when offered in the light of a differentia, is of little avail. Any object of human experience may be similarly characterized as a union or fusion of sense and meaning. Every object, as psychology teaches, is a combination of sensation and meaning. Thus, in the case of a hat, the meaning is as intimately a part of the hat as the more obtrusively sensuous element. All this is old, and demands no special elucidation. Its present significance, however, is of great value. For the simple truth is, that if we do not speak of art otherwise than as "meaning in sensuous form," we say little of special pertinency in describing the distinctive nature of art.

Such a dual nature is characteristic not only of art but of things in general. Yet art-theory revolved about this point as if the Gordian Knot of its problems was here to be untied. In this respect the instincts of the theorists were partly sound. Yet their gyrations served merely to develop three types of art speculation. In the first, art is said to involve as its distinctive mark a perfect union or fusion of sense and meaning. In another, art is identified with the "meaning" aspect, in relation to which the sensuous aspect is affirmed as more or less external and accidental. In the third form, on the contrary, it is the sensuous aspect that is made primary, and the meaning aspect that is made secondary or negligible. Hegel incorporates all three of these theories in his triple classification of art as symbolic, classical, and romantic. In symbolic art, the sensuous element is said to predominate over the meaning aspect. In classical art, the two are said to be in perfect fusion or balance. And in romantic art, the meaning aspect is said to predominate over the sensuous. But since, with Hegel, the romantic form of art is the highest, he, in harmony with most of our modern theorists, presents himself as an exponent of that view of art in which meaning, whether feeling, idea, or expression, is made to constitute the central differentia of art. Schiller, following Kant, may be taken as the most aggressive exponent of the view that art is the perfect fusion or balance of sense and meaning; while the experimental psychologist, at least in the spirit of his method, inclines to make the sensuous element the more fundamental of the two. Not one of these posi-

tions, however, can be accepted as establishing the differentia of art. They alike present the same error, though they accentuate their error differently. For if art is dual, so, too, are things in general; and in ordinary experience we encounter the same variety in the accentuation of sense and meaning. If, then, art is really so different from things in general, as is uniformly affirmed, and yet in this duality so completely like them, the difference, if it really exists here, must be found in a more ample and specific description of each of the arts involved, whereby this formula will be divested of all its abstract pertinency. Hence no way remains for correcting the limitations of these theorists without compelling their complete abandonment of the generic for the critical conception of the plural arts. But once they have achieved this revolution in view, the bulk of their theory would evaporate. I shall leave them in their confusion to revert to another widely-held formula in art-theory.

#### IMITATION

That art is imitation is a claim of long-standing, enforcing the conclusion that art is in its nature dominantly reproductive and representative. In harmony with this view, the productive and the presentative aspects of art have a purely accidental value, and, as such, are left unaided to struggle the best they can for recognition. That art, however, to take the most striking illustration, is productive in the case of music, is an obvious commonplace: a symphony, even in its crudest form, does not exist before it is created. A

piece of music has no archetype in nature. We may in this manner set about, if we choose, to disprove the claim for imitation as the differentia of art. But I have no desire to examine the same old issue in the same old form, especially since it is a mere variant of the problem just discussed. Let us instead, by way of exception, ask the question: Why is art imitative or representative? I raise this question for two important purposes; first, to show that, even if imitation is not a true differentia, it may, notwithstanding, prove to be a fundamental characteristic of some of the arts; and, secondly, to show that the two opposed aspects of art, instead of being reciprocally destructive, are essentially interdependent.

Painting, to take an illustration, is representative for two reasons. In the first place, if representation or imitation is, as is usually affirmed, a fundamental instinct of man, then painting, which is bi-dimensional, possesses a means to the desired end not to be found in a tri-dimensional object since, from the standpoint of a constructive vision, the bi-dimensional object is as complete as a tri-dimensional one. Thus the technique of painting, in the form of colors, lines, and a constructive space, offers a maximum in the way of capacity, and, through its bi-dimensional character, a minimum in the way of hindrances and limitations in any reconstruction of the world for our dominant sense, sight. In the service, then, of imitation as an instinct, a more efficient, specialized, and psychologically effective instrument than painting is not conceivable.

But painting is representative for another and still deeper reason; for the reason that in and through representation the greatest scope is offered painting in the desired exploitation of its many constituent elements, such as light, color, space, modelling, and lines. Considered from this angle, representation is the best means available for raising the purely presentative aspect of painting to a maximum. But if so, then in painting at least, we have two fundamental reasons why art is representative. First, painting is representative because we are as much interested in representation *per se* as we are in the many other elements,—light, color, modelling, or design. And, secondly, it is representative because constructive in its bearings upon the presentative elements.

But when we cease to ask why art is representative, and, instead, following the lead of tradition, ask, what constitutes art's differentia, we change not only our question but the value that, in this connection, is to be assigned to imitation. In the first place, imitation is not unique to art. Imitation, as bound up with social development and photography, is a commonplace. Secondly, all the arts—as, for example, music—do not involve imitation; or, if it be insisted upon, they present it in a form so altered, or on a scale so small in comparison with the main forms of artistic development, as to be practically negligible. Music, architecture, and all forms of descriptive and lyrical poetry, from the standpoint of imitation, are presentative arts. But, thirdly, whatever the function that we may assign to an art, art must first exist; and, to exist, it must in some form or other be substantive in nature. Hence, from this

standpoint, until the total substantive nature of an art has been decided, no function—as, for example, imitation—however vast, may be chosen as determining the essential nature of that art to the exclusion of other functions which may be equally central and engrossing. The many different aims that have been assigned to art by different theorists as in each case constituting *the* aim, suggest a certain varied fulness in the substantive nature of art that should hold us in check in any disposition to generalize with like error upon the basis of a single characteristic. Several arguments, however, may be adduced why imitation, at least, is not to be identified with the differentia of art. In the first place, history shows that painting developed in two opposite directions, toward pictorial representation and toward arabesque presentation; hence the presentative aspect of art is as ultimate as the representative aspect. Secondly, the plural forms of the arts cannot be accounted for except by reference to the divergent element inherent in their respective materials; namely, their presentative aspect. Thus, each art differentiates itself from the others solely through its material and the cognate ends which this particular material permits. Moreover, every art, over and above the end that may be assigned to it, has its own material requirements and circumscribed capacities; and imitation, like any other end, is dependent for its realization upon these material conditions. It is obvious, therefore, why, in the last analysis, the final test of a painting as an artistic production centers in a technical and in a material as well as in some functional achievement. Hence, although

we may concede that imitation is a vital function within some of the arts, we commit a serious and stultifying error if we identify with imitation the *differentia* of art in general. Historically conceived, this error has done violence to art (1) as self-sufficient; (2) as productive and (3) as presentative.

I must not be construed as so exalting one aspect of art over another as to make it constitute the vital part of art's nature. In this division I have merely insisted upon the fact that art is complex, not simple, in its nature; and that the *differentia* of art is not to be defined apart from the actual nature and history of the arts. Our sole point of issue has been as to whether an affirmed *differentia* is also a fundamental characteristic. In this way, we introduced a constructive principle in an otherwise barren examination of the age-worn formulas of art.

## II

### THE ORIGIN OF ART

A strong tendency exists to expound art in terms of its origin. The method as practised demands careful analysis.

Scientifically speaking, an explanation requires the reference of a thing to its antecedents, whether historical, material, or psychological. An explanation that is couched in any other form is regarded as a myth. We may, of course, adhere to the proper form of explanation and yet be irrelevant or inadequate. Thus I may ask, "Who grew that potato?" You may answer "John Smith," although the more accurate answer

would be that a certain piece of land under John Smith's cultivation was responsible for its growth. Or you may emphasize the special form of the seed as the more important factor. The antecedents to be offered are many, but, unless we definitely indicate the viewpoint of an explanation, our only alternative is to be fairly and reasonably exhaustive. Thus an artist, more pre-occupied with picture-making than with psychology, turns for the explanation of a picture to its history and technique. He may also incorporate psychological principles, since he cannot, in its production, easily ignore the concomitant presence of an individual initiative. But when he affirms, as the art-theorist so habitually does, that the psychophysical individual is the sole antecedent that is present, he commits an error of much the same order as when we say that John Smith grew the potato. The following extract is typical. "The products of the higher arts are of the nature of those owing their origin, in the sphere of thought, to dreaming rather than to planning; in the sphere of feeling, to spontaneity rather than to responsiveness; in the sphere of action, to play rather than to work."<sup>8</sup> This explanation is not only feeble as psychology, but, in its flagrant disregard of art's historical, material, conventional, and technical antecedents, it actually verges upon the grotesque. The distinctive qualities of an artistic production cannot be exclusively derived, as is so habitually maintained, either from a psychophysical, a biological, or a sociological principle. In this respect, priority is of necessity assigned to the material, the

<sup>8</sup> G. W. Raymond, *The Essentials of Aesthetics*, p. 40.



technical, the conventional, and the historical principles. Yet theorists write as if psychology or sociology could give "to airy nothing" the distinctive qualities of music, painting, or poetry.

Several factors have contributed to bring about this distortion of the problem. Foremost among them is the invariable adoption of a generic conception of art whereby a theorist may seek to explain what in truth can have no existence. For the connoisseur, however, art is a matter-of-fact reality for which he hungers much after the manner in which he hungers for bread, honor, or fame. He does not, to be sure, hunger for a generic something; what he hungers for is painting, music, or poetry in all their complexity of concrete elements. Hence the business of a scientist is to explain the origin, not of a generic something, but of painting, music, or poetry; and to accomplish his end, he may legitimately adopt an historical, a material, a conventional, a technical, or a psychological point of view. Nor may a theorist, without inviting serious peril, too sharply divorce any one of these aspects from the others. It may be interesting and, within limits, permissible to ascertain the extent to which they may singly contribute in the formation of painting, music, or poetry; but a principle when thus isolated must not exclude the thought of its proper dependence upon the other four. If we fail to preserve this perspective, we will do violence, not only to the other four, but to the one that is under special investigation. Obvious as these statements must appear, the fact remains that modern theorists have been hopelessly caught up, on the one side, by the gen-

eric conception of art, and, on the other, by an untranscended subjectivism. They, to my thinking, became entangled by the latter trend because of the predominance given to the generic conception of art; and they found no special need for altering this conception because of their ready employment of psychological abstractions or a faculty psychology. Hence modern theorists not only consistently ignore four of the five principles mentioned, but they offer little more than a caricature of the one they champion, namely, the psychological principle.

#### ARISTOTLE

Aristotle, writing exclusively of poetry, claims that it "sprang from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures. \* \* \* Next, there is the instinct for harmony and rhythm." Aristotle, however, does not hold, as so many of the modern theorists are prone to do, that art had its sole origin and differentia in instincts. In this connection, he emphasizes the historical origin, and he also includes what in my terminology may be called the material, technical, and conventional origin. In fact, he explicitly holds that the differentia of art is due to its material in its historical, psychological and logical development. Thus, referring to the different forms of poetry to which *The Poetics* is confined, he writes: "They differ from one another in three respects,—

the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct." It remains to be added that his survey is strictly empirical, save for the fact that, with him, species and development have a transempirical foundation. Aristotle's union of principles was never again achieved in modern theory. Now, on the contrary, the problem of origin is moulded upon a generic conception of art and a faculty-psychology.

### PLAY-IMPULSE

Such principles as taste, pleasure, and association represent the first incorporation of psychological principles in modern art-theory. This mode of explanation had its origin with British thinkers, and later, through the influence of Kant, shaped the general trend of modern aesthetic thought.

Schiller, following a suggestion dropped by Kant, inaugurated the next advance. He incorporated an active principle, the so-called play-impulse. It is not necessary to enlarge upon Schiller's utilization of this principle; all that needs to be said is that he correlates it less specifically with the origin than with the differentia of art. Schiller's position is clearly echoed by G. Baldwin Brown. He writes that "man possesses an ideal self-determined life, existing side by side with, but apart from, his life as conditioned by material needs. This life expresses itself in, and is nourished by various forms of free and spontaneous expression and action, which in the lower grades of being may be termed simply 'play,' but in the higher grades take the shape of that rational and significant

play resulting in art." Art, like play, is affirmed to be "free;" and this is the sole point of likeness between them that is noted and insisted upon.

Schiller's idea acquired a wide acceptance. It was adopted, however, not as the outcome of a more careful examination, but because it fitted in with the widely entertained conception of art as a disinterested activity.

It would be of little profit to follow the history of the play-impulse in all its devious turns. Theorists usually assume that art and play are fundamentally identical. Yet they cannot be so *identical* as to exclude all possible *difference*; otherwise we would not have two things but only one. Thus, turning to Hirn for a fair sample of what is commonly encountered, we read that "art is in a far higher degree than any of the sports and games, able to satisfy the greatest and most fundamental instincts of man." But if art is able to satisfy a larger number of fundamental instincts than sports and games, why pick out and exalt the play-impulse as most important? Of course, if we emphasize the other impulses, the *identity* between art and play would vanish; and if we exclusively mention the play-impulse, the *difference* between art and play would vanish. In this dilemma, the usual exponent of the theory becomes arbitrary and dogmatic. Content with the conclusion that art and play are free, he overlooks the facts that *all* human impulses are inherently self-expressive; that freedom or its absence is not an independent quality, but the expression of a favorable or the absence of an inhibiting condition; that an acquired interest may become as

free in its expression as a natural one; and that an interest or impulse is made specific by its *perceptive* aspect, so that art and play in the concrete are not and could not be identical, even though, in their conative abstraction, they appear the same. Indeed, what two impulses in their purely conative aspects are not the same? But relinquish abstractions, and, instead, turn to the *objective* aspects of art and play, and what man in his senses would hold that a closer resemblance existed between golf and painting than between either of them and some possible kind of object on the other side of the moon? The theorist seems to ignore not only all the concrete differences that exist between painting, music, and poetry, but all the concrete differences that exist in golf as opposed to either painting, music, or poetry. Yet in the face of all such radical and unabridgable differences, he, upon the assumption of a *free* impulse, which no psychology would for an instant countenance, affirms not only a resemblance between art and play, but even the origin, the substance, the differentia, and the reality of art. The position in either form is so grotesque that it is scarcely conceivable.

It is interesting here to consider Grant Allen as representative of the theorists who have made false progress. In his *Physiological Aesthetics*, he states that he does "little else than repeat and expand the definition [of art and play] given by Herbert Spencer." "Every nervous structure in its intervals of repose is perpetually undergoing repair. When repair has continued for a considerable period without fresh discharge, the structure reaches a state of high effi-

ciency, and possesses an unusual quantity of potential energy. \* \* \* Hence arises two classes of impulses, those which give rise to Play, and those which give rise to Art and the Aesthetic Pleasures. What is common to these two classes is their remoteness from life-serving function and their having pleasure alone as their immediate end. We have next to see wherein they differ from one another.

“Man like every other organism lives perpetually surrounded by an environment. The environment acts upon the organism, and the organism re-acts upon the environment. Hence arises the two fundamental portions of our physical nature, the passive and the active. \* \* \* In this primordial distinction we see the root of the difference which we recognize between Play and the Aesthetic Feelings. The first is active, the second are passive.”<sup>9</sup>

According to this passage, art resembles play in three particulars; they both involve a “well-nourished organ” with its spontaneous tendency to exercise itself; they both involve a “remoteness from life-serving functions;” and they both “have pleasure alone as their immediate end.” And art and play are said to *differ* because play is “active” and art “passive.” Observe, please, that the resemblances and differences insisted upon are all subjective, and that art and play, in their objective aspects, are not even so much as suspected to exist. But I have adduced this extract for another purpose. It illustrates the usual attempt to find a broader and deeper foundation for art, not by incorporating the material,

<sup>9</sup> Page 20.

technical, conventional, and historical principles, but by giving to art a new *subjective* basis. But of this new explanation we may say, that if his physiological basis fails to convert itself into a conative principle, it remains of necessity beyond the pale of art as conscious activity; and if, when it is converted into a conation, we fail to correlate it properly with the other two aspects of the psychic life, perception and affection, conation remains beyond the pale of intelligent reasoning. Moreover, if the *objective* (perceptive) resemblances and differences of art and play remain wholly unconsidered, and the subjective ones inadequately so, then we may conclude that Allen throws no light upon the nature and origin either of art or play. A faculty-psychology does not become more rational in its assumed and unaided production of a thing by merely deepening or altering its basis—and that is the gist of what Grant Allen offers. And what is said of him applies to the usual exponent of this theory.

#### OTHER PRINCIPLES BOUND UP WITH THE EXPLANATION OF ART'S ORIGIN

It is no easy task to lay bare the full psychology of the simplest human action; but when, in addition, psychology pretends, single-handed, to explain the whole of a subject so complex as the art of civilized peoples, the task is simply impossible. As a result of these limitations, certain theorists have advanced the claim "that if we are ever to attain a scientific knowledge of the art of civilized peoples, it will be

after we have first investigated the nature and condition of the art of savages." <sup>10</sup> This claim contains an element of truth that may blind us to its error. It draws attention to the historic basis of art, not to illuminate art from the historic standpoint, but to prove that art is ubiquitous in its appearance and tenacious in its grip upon man. The real aim of this method, therefore, is not really historical in the sense in which the term is employed by art-critics, but psychological. It by no means follows, however, that the simpler forms of primitive art are easier to grasp in their psychological implications than the more complex, unless we can also be said to possess an equal grasp of the psychology of primitive man. But since this psychology is but problematical when compared with our knowledge of civilized man, the procedure recommended may multiply rather than reduce our difficulties. It offers a broader, but not a superior psychological basis in the examination of art; and it cloaks a confusion when advocated as a distinct method.

Turning to other writers, we find but one difference, namely, that instead of the play-impulse, other impulses are seized upon as central in art-production. First among this group of theorists are those who postulate an art-impulse. Their position, however, reflects a plain reversion to a faculty-psychology. We may with as much justice speak of a ship-building impulse as of an art-impulse. Hence such writers as still persist in the use of this term feel the need, as Hirn writes, "to bring it into connection with some

<sup>10</sup> Ernst Grosse, *Beginnings of Art*, p. 21.



empirical function, from the nature of which these specifically artistic qualities may be derived." Accordingly, Hirn identifies the art-impulse with "the activities of emotional expression," and H. R. Marshall, "with the desire to produce objects which delight and attract by pleasing." There is no end to the variety of principles thus presented. Since the time of Darwin, frequent attempts have been made to connect the origin of art with sex,<sup>11</sup> and since the time of Guyau, to connect it with a sociological basis: the desire to communicate our experiences to others. In the latest development, writers, instead of advertng to a single impulse, insist upon the presence of a group of them as underlying art. "Besides appeals to our desires for beauty," art, we are told, "appeals to quite different demands of the human soul, such as the demand for logical activity, for moral satisfaction, and for all manner of emotional stimulation, from the grossest to the most exalted: let alone the demand for self-expression, for construction, and for skillful handicraft."<sup>12</sup> But through-

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<sup>11</sup> Emphasis upon the principle of sex finds its latest expression in the Freudian theory. This theory attempts to formulate some of the latent psychic factors present in determining an individual's choice for one mode of expression rather than another within the limits prescribed by the materials and canons of an art. Psychoanalysis, then, as the method is termed, in no way explains the origin of art; it offers itself more specifically as the handmaid to biography. Freud himself explicitly states this fact. "If psychoanalysis," he writes in his *Leonardo da Vinci*, "does not explain to us the fact of Leonardo's artistic accomplishment, it still gives us an understanding of the expression and limitations of the same."

<sup>12</sup> Lee and Thomson, *Beauty and Ugliness*. Hirn presents the same conclusion.

out, the general limitations remain the same: art has somewhat broadened its psychological basis, but it has not in modern theory transcended this basis by a proper correlation of the psychological principles with the other four principles that I have insisted upon. As a result even the psychological principles have remained warped in their development; they remained throughout abstract or under the control of a faculty-psychology, instead of being brought under the conception of the psychic-triad in its direct bearing upon the material, conventional, and technical principles as the history of the arts presents them. There is no doubt that the largest variety of impulses, in the most subtle grouping, underlies the creation and the enjoyment of art; but it is the divergent material, each with its own cognate aims, that particularizes and differentiates not only the arts in their plural form, but also the subjective elements of the psychic life. Art stands for a group of divergent things; if human needs, native and cultivated, did not also find a variety of gratifications in them, then painting, music, and poetry would never have been shaped into those wonderful forms in which we now have them. And if art in its development is dependent upon man, man, too, and particularly the artist, is dependent for his development upon art. These principles, the material, conventional, technical, and psychological, exist in strict interdependence. To view them otherwise, is to falsify the facts as they actually exist and operate in the interest of a theory not even half-baked.

## III

## THE VALUE OF ART

It is a common practice to assess the value of art by such rough and external standards as utility, nature, truth, and morality. The conviction that is embodied is, that art has no self-justifying reality or standard. As an off-set to this claim, we have the slogan "art for art's sake." It registers a protest against the practice of evaluating art for something and by something other than itself. But this slogan does not carry us very far, particularly so if we retain the generic conception of art. If we abandon the abstract for the concrete conception, we are confronted by the fact that nothing in this world, not even morality, can have its reality properly assessed when kept wholly unrelated to everything else. Nevertheless, the slogan embodies a vital truth; it enforces the fact that art has its own materials, conventions, laws, and aims; and that by virtue of them it is capable of engaging and retaining a profound and ever-growing human interest. My own view is that art must be judged from several standpoints, from the standpoint of its own material as historically and scientifically evolved, and from the standpoint of a complex psychophysical individual capable of natural and cultivated interests. In this view, it is also necessary to conceive the individual concretely, that is, as one capable of growth and cultivation in a civilized world of varied demands and interests. Art cannot be otherwise evaluated; but if art cannot be, neither can utility, nature, truth, nor morality. Yet these stand-

ards are offered, not only as more final, but as more authoritative than art in the complete organization of man in a highly complex civilized world. I do not, of course, imply that utility, nature, truth, and morality lack wholly in what is ultimate; I merely affirm that art in any conception of the general values of life is as ultimate as either of the others; and that they may be and are as commonly judged from the standpoint of art, as art may be judged by them. But just how far and wherein do they thus reciprocally operate? This is the problem I now wish to pursue in its traditional development.

#### ART AND UTILITY

The utility-criterion is reflected in two forms in art-discussion. Art is said to be a "disinterested" something, and in this view, which we have already fully examined, the very virtue of art is its non-utility. Of course art cannot in actual fact be "disinterested" unless it is wholly emptied of content, but history proves how successful theorists have been in reducing its contents to a zero: art is "a copy," "an appearance," "an insubstantial form," "a third removal from reality." Empty and self-destructive as either side of this view of necessity is, yet by its large and established recognition it represents the positive (?) form of the utility-criterion. But our concern here is with the second form of the utility-criterion: "artistic work is essentially luxurious, it is demanded after the needs of man are satisfied;" that is, art is an idle and a rather superfluous thing since it fails to feed,

house, and clothe us. The presumption is, of course, that man is supremely practical, that what he cannot eat and see has no practical value, and that the elected death of a martyr, the heroism of a friend, the sacrifice of a mother, and the loyalty to ideals are sheer chimeras. This view remains to be examined.

It is a matter of familiar experience that few things, upon reflection, retain the appearance they may *seem* to possess. Take the average man's conception of so ordinary a thing as a stone! For a psychologist, a stone is a sensation-complex. He designates it thus, for the reason that a stone is at least in part dependent for its appearance upon the specific structure of our sense-organs. Chemistry extends this process in a stone's revaluation, although the chemist, in reaching his own specific conclusion, proceeds along a line of thought very different from that pursued by the psychologist. For the chemist, a stone is either a mass of energy or a mass of elementary atoms. The physicist in general confirms the conclusions of the chemist, but his conception is reached by a line of thought and by a series of experiments very different from those that engage the thought of a chemist. Next the geologist will scan a stone. In it he sees the history of large geological events. The stone of a chance observer thus acquires a meaning little dreamed of. It is anything but what at first it *seems* to be. Here, then, are facts of general scientific experience that we must not lose sight of when dealing with the assumed non-utility of art. To many it may *seem* "an idle pastime." This view in itself, however, proves nothing; and a larger survey of art may come to establish, not the

unimportance of art, but the unimportance of the average man's view of it. It is not safe off-hand, to pronounce upon the reality of the most commonplace thing; and it is rather dangerous to do so when dealing with so complex a form of human experience as art.

When is a thing useful or practical? To answer this question, we must revert to the complex nature of man. He, as we know, is a creature of many capacities and susceptibilities; hence a creature of many needs. He has fundamental and insistent needs alike for food, for his fellowmen, for science, art, and religion—in fact for needs so numerous and often so subtle that no exhaustive classification of them is at all possible. Moreover, man often finds certain things necessary to his being, the profit-and-loss quotation of which he rarely inquires into, as, for example, his home, children, garden, play, work, reading, and smoking,—smoking with the large industry that has been reared upon it. In fact, man may persist in the satisfaction of a need that is obviously hostile or even pernicious, and yet have nothing more to offer in support of it than some silly habit, crude instinct, or blind obsession. Indeed, one wonders how the average man with only an average capacity for introspection ever commits the folly of regarding himself fundamentally practical; for, swept as he is by illusions at every turn, what is he but a pipe for Fortune's fingers to sound what stops she please. Thus art may come to seem everything to one man; to another, it may seem nothing; and so it is with every other thing in life to which I may refer. In the light of such facts, what is fundamentally useful and what is useless? The answer will depend upon

and vary with the man. Certain it is that art neither exalts its value nor decreases it by a reference to a standard at once so variable and ubiquitous as the utility-criterion. Least of all is life in its full sweep ever to be computed on a bread and butter basis.

Or let us view the matter from a slightly different angle! Bread is useful in satisfying hunger, but it has little use in the manufacture of bricks or in the spinning of a top. Earth, too, is a very useful thing in the growing of crops, but mere dirt when present on a city-street, or mere soil in the unkempt appearance of the unwashed. The principle here intimated is readily recognized: nothing is useful at all times and under all conditions; and nothing is so useless, not even a once discarded by-product, but it may be useful under certain other conditions. Hence, if art is useless for him who has neither the eyes nor ears to perceive, it may, notwithstanding, for a Beethoven, a Michael Angelo, or a Shakespeare, stand second to nothing in all the rest of creation.

#### ART AND NATURE

Art constantly has its value fixed by its reference to nature. Three views have obtained currency: art is inferior, co-equal, or superior to nature. The first conception is the oldest and probably the most common. Art in this view is a mere "counterfeit presentment" of nature. In the following lines from Shakespeare, the second view is stated.

Nature is made better by no means  
 But Nature makes that means; over that art  
 Which you say adds to Nature, is an art  
 That Nature makes.

Here the implication is that art and nature are co-equal in rank. Such movements in art as realism or naturalism are in line with this conception.

Aristotle is the most conspicuous exponent of the third view. With him, art is an organized form of reality and for that reason superior to all forms of unorganized nature. Miss Rowland gives a beautiful expression of it: "It is not the mother singing to her baby, who feels that the song is art as opposed to nature. It is as natural for her to sing to it as it is to love it. If she has not the art of song, she longs for it to fulfill her nature. Moreover, the finer the lullaby, and the better she sings, the better she likes it. Beethoven, Brahms, or Strauss would not frighten her. The most exquisite lullaby ever created would not be too much art. \* \* \* It is more likely to be the childless woman who sighs over the artificiality of lullabies. \* \* \* Curiously enough our use of words belies us. If a woman is very stately, we call her "statuesque," that is, as beautiful as sculpture. A very exquisite bit of natural scenery we call "picturesque," that is, fine enough for painting. A sufficiently charming voice is named "musical," a sufficiently striking situation, "dramatic." Thus, as soon as nature shows a particular kind of excellence, we indicate our approval by calling it artistic. We can give no higher praise. We have by this very speech betrayed our conviction that nature reconstructed by human nature attains an eminence which nature left alone only at times can do by chance."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Significance of Art.



Has the evaluation of art by a reference to nature any relevancy? This is a big question; too big, in fact, to be here pursued in all its twists and turns. It is sufficient to say that the term *nature*, as commonly employed, is both vague and ambiguous. In one sense it includes everything, in every vestige and shred of its existence, cosmic nature, human nature, and art; and in another sense, the term is used as antithetical both to human nature and to art. Without attempting to clarify this ambiguity or to exploit it to advantage, let me state the art-nature relation in the form of a few questions. Do we enjoy color in painting because nature presents it, or do we enjoy color in painting for the same reason that we enjoy it in nature? Secondly, does painting merely reproduce color as nature presents it, or do both painting and nature produce color according to the same general laws of the color-phenomenon? Answer these questions in their obvious conclusion, and you give proof of the relative self-sufficiency of painting. Then go on to ask whether the production of light in painting is not even more dependent upon its own laws and conventions than upon the mode of its production in nature, especially since the brightest light of a canvas is a mere shadow compared with the brilliancy of actual daylight, and yet both have the same general effects, and are enjoyed for the same general reasons. Pursue this line of inquiry until you have exhausted every constituent element of which painting is composed, and you will find that painting has its more relevant standards, not in the crude nature-reference, but in its historical and its technical development with their

direct reference to the mechanics of the material involved and to the needs, aims, and skill of man. Then leave the subject of painting and pass on to that of music, and ask: by a reference to what in nature can we determine the value of a sonata, a symphony, or mere rag-time? Or again: by reference to what in nature can we determine the form of a drama or the beauty of a lyric? With both questions the answer will be the same: music and poetry are enjoyed for the possession of qualities so unique and compelling, and they are created by the mastery of a material so unique and yet so complex, that the mystery of mysteries remains, how man ever came thus to "triumph over nature."

I do not, of course, imply that art is in no way dependent upon nature; I merely affirm the existence of *two* ultimate standards of reference, whereby art is as apt to approve or condemn nature, as the reverse. The so-called "schools" in art, whether in painting, music, or poetry, owe their one-sided advocacy in large measure to the fact that in such matters as are herein discussed, the average man vaguely gropes about, mostly in the thickest darkness and sometimes only in the barest twilight. I will return to the art-nature relation in the chapters that follow.

### ART AND TRUTH

Many theorists hold that art is the presentation of truth and that ideas constitute the real measure of its substance. I have already quoted Ruskin to the effect that the best art is an embodiment of "the

greatest number of great ideas." Sometimes writers emphasize the truth of fact rather than truth in the abstract, in which case we have what is termed naturalism. Naturalism, however, embraces other motives as well as the intellectualistic trend. Among other things, it presupposes the existence in art of a substance other than mere truth or ideas, whereas the intellectualistic theory denies the existence of anything else in art worthy of attention except ideas or truth. I can readily understand how an art like poetry could give support to this conception; but it is more difficult to understand how music or even painting could lend it support, since truth or an idea is as definite a thing as tone or color, and no one not warped in his thinking by some preconceived theory can deny that music is primarily a structure in tone, and painting a structure in color. Therefore, the statement that poetry presents ideas is clear to me as far as it goes, but the statement that music or painting presents ideas exclusively, indicates a claim so extreme as to baffle me.

What, then, does the intellectualist imply when, with Ruskin, he holds that good painting is the embodiment of "the greatest number of great ideas?" If he happens to be a mystic, it would be no profit to inquire what he may have in mind; for if he really had a mind, he would scarcely be a mystic. With the mystic ignored, we may say, then, that the intellectualist could have either one of four distinct things in mind; he may think of painting from the standpoint of its historical development, or from the standpoint of its technical development, its representative capacity, or its mind-born character. Truth in its

strictest meaning implies a reference of an idea to some standard whereby it is held that, when they agree we have truth, and when they disagree, error. Of course, in the field of philosophy, where expert opinion on the question of truth is supposedly obtainable, we are given a variety of descriptions: but the definition of it that I have offered is the one of largest usage. We may now widen this definition somewhat by saying that when a given achievement in art is referred to either one of the four standards mentioned, it embodies the attribute of truth. Of course, we somewhat stretch the meaning of truth when we thus conceive of it, but I am willing to stretch a point so as not to reduce the whole of intellectualism to the level of mysticism. We may now consider each of these references.

From the historic standpoint, art is appraised rather as good or bad than as true or false. We may, therefore, abandon this reference as irrelevant from the standpoint of truth. Yet the mere fact of the irrelevancy proves that something exists in painting that the truth-criterion is unable to measure or gauge. Hence, painting, in that large extent in which critics deal with it in its historical production, possesses a substance which could never be termed truth nor be made amenable to its requirements. Instead, we more properly designate this substance as a matter of color, light, representation, space, modelling, etc. Obviously, painting embodies something other than truth.

From the standpoint of its technique, conventions, and canons, painting is more easily defined in terms of truth. Thus, a violation may be identified with

“error,” and a successful achievement with “truth;” and common usage, although not strictly uniform, supports this mode of speech. But since painting is more correctly identified with a pictorial than a technical product, the substance embraced in the previous reference, the conclusion would follow that the truth-criterion in matters of technique is only indirectly relevant to painting.

From the standpoint of painting as a mode of representation, the truth-aspect appears in a more palpable form. In this connection we may speak of painting as true or as not true of the phenomenon it attempts to depict. But since all painting, as we shall show more fully in the next chapter, is not a matter of representation but of presentation, the truth-criterion becomes restricted in its application to painting as a whole. Moreover, since the truth of representation is conditioned by the limitations and possibilities of the art as well as by the general nature of the phenomenon presented, conflict is bound to arise, and in this conflict, the facts of painting take priority. Hence the truth-criterion is as dependent for its existence upon the facts of painting, as painting, in the mind of an intellectualist, is thought to be dependent upon truth. It is here that the slogan “art for art’s sake” acquires its special pertinency, for the fact remains that we do not in painting concern ourselves as consciously and deliberately with the enjoyment of truth as such, as with the beauty of something, whether a line, color, or representation, made possible by an adherence to some form of technical and representative truth. Hence it is not truth *per se*

but representation from a pictorial standpoint that we admire. Art has its own concrete existence and reality; why, then, first reduce this reality to a shadow and in its place put another form of ultimate reality, a place it will never be able to fill with that peculiar charm and power which each ultimate can exert when in its rightful place?

From the mind-born standpoint, art is said to have its origin in an idea or aim. Truth is said to result when the idea or aim achieves an adequate expression. But, when thus conceiving of it, we must not forget that the idea or aim is a product of art-training and tradition, and that they seek for the realization of a pictorial and not an ideational result. Hence what we directly enjoy in painting is not an idea but a pictorial something, in the production of which the idea at best is a mere tool or instrument. I have already enlarged upon this matter in several parts of the book.

We may end this exposition with the statement that the intellectualistic theory has an element of validity, but that it *excludes* far more validity than it *includes*. A theory of art that reduces the actual substance of an art when in its best form to a zero, is a theory that reduces itself but not art to zero; and a theory that holds that art in its best form is not art, but science, wholly mistakes both the nature of art and science.

#### ART AND MORALITY

There are many who confound art with morality. In its most general form, their formula is: Art for life's sake. This formula has been conceived in opposition

to the formula: Art for art's sake. By the latter we are reminded that art is a unique type of reality with its own laws and requirements; and this position has been re-inforced by the fictitious principle of "disinterestedness." The formula "art for life's sake" may thus be viewed as an attempt to bring art into more intimate connection with an agent; and it may also be viewed as a reminder that nothing in this world can exist out of all relation to other established values. But as the special substance of art is commonly ignored, its place is apt to be usurped by other forms of reality. Tolstoi presents a good illustration. He holds that art has for its substance "the union of mankind with God and with each other;" and in the view he thus presents, "beauty is a vitiating factor."

How music could be confounded with morality is difficult to grasp. The confusion, of course, is more easily understood in connection with poetry and painting, for they incorporate a subject-matter charged with all kinds of ethical distinctions; but music has little substance not directly resolvable into tone and rhythm. Of course, music may create pernicious effects within an organism; but if the effects be pernicious, music would remain incapable of moral regeneration; it must either live or die for what it is. Not so, however, with poetry and painting, since their substance is at least in part composed of an element showing moral distinction. The question thus arises as to the extent in which morality may shape the results of these two arts. The question is easily answered. We may, for illustration, take painting. It is a complex phenomenon of many divergent and

incompatible principles; nor is there a masterpiece in existence which does not reflect sacrifice and compromise; hence we but add an additional principle when we include that of morality. And the only issue is, whether a given artist handled these principles with that balance and good taste, exacted, on the one hand, by the requirements of the material worked in, and, on the other, by the demands legitimately raised by the values of orderly life.



## CHAPTER VI

### Painting

A fully-rounded theory of painting, or any other art, must supply an answer to four logically distinguishable questions:

- (1) What are the constituent elements of which it is composed?
- (2) What is the full, substantive value of each element?
- (3) What are the constructive principles present in the finished product?
- (4) How is the merit of the finished product evaluated?

#### I

The elements of painting may be arranged in two groups: those that are dominantly presentative and those that, in respect to painting, are more obviously representative, although the latter constitute as intimate a part of painting as the former. Accepting painting in the form in which history and present-day endeavor have approvingly shaped it, and not, of course, in the form in which some erroneous, abstract theory may have defined it, we may enumerate the elements of painting as follows:

*The presentative elements.*

Color  
Light  
Shadow  
Atmosphere

*The representative elements.*

Design  
Figures  
Ideation  
Affection

*The representative elements.*

Lines  
 Drawing  
 Mass  
 Space  
 Modelling  
 Proportion  
 Harmony  
 Movement  
 Rhythm  
 Texture  
 Surfaces  
 Brush-work  
 Composition

*The representative elements.*

Conation  
 Craftsmanship

Painting is commonly termed a representative art. What does this designation signify? It would seem to denote that painting stands for something other than itself. But to the extent, at least, to which painting is composed of the elements enumerated in the first column, how can it stand for something other than itself? Color, for example, is not represented, but directly presented; and, for the colorist, it is the one absorbing interest in painting. Others, again, may affirm "that the chief feature of a picture is its drawing; that either the winding line, or the straight line, or the broken line, as the exigencies of the case require, is the one and only thing of beauty; and that other features of painting, such as color, atmosphere, light, shadow, are but after-considerations, mere decorative effects."<sup>1</sup> Or we may be told by artists and critics of equal rank that "the principal person in a picture is the light." And in this manner, I might insist upon a full recognition of all the elements enumerated in the first column. Obviously, then, the

<sup>1</sup>J. C. Van Dyke, *Art for Art's Sake*, p. 39.

prominence of these elements in painting runs counter to the designation of it as representative.

But it might be asserted that some of the elements enumerated in the first column are less directly presentative than others; that light and space, for example, are less presentative than color or lines; that they are suggested rather than directly portrayed. But when we thus speak of light, do we not confuse its *source* with its general *appearance*? I look out of my window, and from the general appearance of things, as reflected in color, I am led to conclude that either the sun is shining or that it is not shining. Ignoring for the moment the idea of source, we may say as a matter of general experience that we do not actually see light, whether in nature or on a canvas, but that light reveals its existence by an appearance peculiar to things; and it is light, as thus reflected, that artists depict, often with a vitality and reality equal to our natural experience of it. And, as for our perception of space, it is an established fact of science that space, too, is a pure construction based upon visual appearance, whether the space be on canvas or actual. It is for these reasons that we come to revel in the light and space of a canvas with the same sense of their direct reality that we have of its lines or color. All the other elements in the first column admit of the same order of reasoning.

Is painting, then, in no sense representative? Yes, but it is representative in a minor sense only,—to the extent to which it is said to mirror individuals, things, thoughts, and feeling; for these elements, in our general knowledge and experience, are too full in con-

tent and too distinctive to be adequately set forth by painting.

But since the elements of the first group are more directly constituent of painting, the question arises whether the elements of the second order, because more circumscribed in their actual presentation, are as properly constituent of it as the former. The problem is an issue of long standing.

Let us inquire whether the elements of the second group are alien or cognate to painting? The answer will depend on our definition of painting. If we hold, for example, that painting is a strictly homogeneous phenomenon, we must discountenance the incorporation of any element that would make it heterogeneous. But is painting in actual fact a homogeneous phenomenon? If we conclude that it is, shall we identify it exclusively with colors, or with light, lines, atmosphere, modelling, or space? If we introduce a principle of elimination, where shall we stop, and what would we have left of *painting*,—that complex product of varied interest and development as history presents it; for painting has no measure and boundary in a prefixed constitution of things to which we might defer for guidance. Let us, therefore, revert to one of the many solutions of the problem. Miss Puffer's *Psychology of Beauty* yields a ready passage. Labelling colors, lines, and symmetry as the formal elements, she places them in one group, and figures and meaning (ideational and emotional significance) in another. Then, at great length, she presents the relation of the two groups. The following passage will tell its own story:

“Franz von Lenbach was once asked what he thought likely to be the fate of his own work. ‘As for that,’ he replied, ‘I think I may possibly have a chance of living, but *only* if Individualization or Characterization be deemed to constitute a quality of permanent value in a picture. This, however, I shall never know, for it can only be adjudged by posterity. If that verdict should prove unfavorable, then my work, too, will perish with the rest,—for it cannot compare on their lines with the great masters of the past.’ That this is indeed an issue is shown by the contrasting opinion of the critic who exclaimed before a portrait, ‘Think away the head and face, and you will have a wonderful effect of color.’ The analysis of visible beauty accordingly resolves itself into the explanation of the beauty of form (colors, lines and symmetry), and the fixing in relation thereto of other factors.”<sup>2</sup> That is, painting in its own actual substance is to be identified with color, lines, and symmetry; and the other elements (figures and meaning) as more or less foreign, may solicitously reach out to be included, provided, of course, that they do not thereby exact a sacrifice from the so-called formal elements. If the foreign elements, by chance, exact a sacrifice, then it is they that, in all propriety, should pack up and leave. For what does Lenbach imply when he says that his work may not “compare on their lines with the great masters of the past?” What constitute “their lines?” He would surely not affirm that “characterization” was not practised by the old masters? In this, the modern school invented nothing new. In fact, this

<sup>2</sup>Page 92.

long practice has not even been confined to European masters. A Chinese writer of the twelfth century informs us that "there is no branch of painting so difficult as portrait painting. It is not that reproduction of the features is difficult; the difficulty lies in painting the springs of action hidden in the heart. The face of a great man may resemble that of a mean man, but their hearts will not be alike. Therefore to paint a likeness which does not exhibit these heart-impulses, leaving it an open question whether the sitter is a great man or a mean man, is to be unskilled in the art of portraiture."<sup>3</sup> Characterization, then, is one of "their lines." Why, then, should the disposition exist to deprecate representation? Surely an element, merely because representative, is not foreign to painting; for not only *figures*, but color, lines, light, shadows, space, and atmosphere also embody distinctive forms and meaning; and shall we then, if consistent, exclude them and, with them, the whole of painting? Two errors have confused the issue: first, the error of conceiving of representative data that exclude presentative data, and *vice versa*; and, second, the error of overlooking the fact that every constituent element in painting may be in serious conflict with every other element; that colors war with each other; that light is in conflict with colors, and colors with light; and so on, through the whole list of elements. Hence "characterization," merely because it is representative and because it is in conflict, presents no exception. It, too, as a substantive element in art, must run the gauntlet. We need inquire only how a painter

<sup>3</sup>H. A. Giles, Introduction to the History of Chinese Art, p. 26.

evaluated these different principles in their joint conflict and development. Did he or did he not succeed in this complex field on the same large scale in which the best of the old masters excelled? If he did, he, too, is a master; if he did not, protestation or affected novelty will not serve to conceal a mediocrity.

It is undeniable that the so-called representative elements are as constituent of painting as are color and light. Figures are as essential in the fullest possible exploitation of color as color is in the elaboration of figures. The only question is whether an artist in the portrayal of figures flagrantly ignores other principles equally vital to art. A single requirement is imposed,—that an artist should not attempt in painting to depict what is foreign to *painting* in the best forms in which it has always been developed, and, for all we know, always will be. At any rate, no other standard of reference exists.

But it is necessary to inquire with more accuracy just what the term representation means, and what sort of reality it possesses in its own distinctive nature. A photograph is said to represent an object when it reproduces it within the general conditions prescribed by the fact of photography; what is more, we may, under certain conditions, as often as not prefer to the original the representation, limited though it may be. Thus *in my room*, I naturally prefer pictures of a tree, brook, and battle scene to the originals. At the least, they may help there to fill up a desired amount of wall-space, but I may also enjoy looking at them; and when an interest in them thus terminates, or when they become the basis of some new interest, their

representative capacity approximates a vanishing point. So it is with representation in painting. If, in one aspect of its nature, it truly points to something else, this reference need not and does not constitute its entire nature. I may enjoy it rather for what it directly presents, not only in the form of lines and colors, but as an object with a measure and boundary of its own as distinctive as the original. A variety of of likes and dislikes, or even instincts, may underlie the preference. In this case, of course, my interest in it would embody a paradox, namely, my enjoyment would ostensibly be founded on its resemblance to the original, although I may in no way care for the original in its reality and still less desire to have it about me under the conditions prescribed by the many and varied facts of life. And yet representation does not lose in value as representation solely because, with this view, it would be said to rest upon a paradox. Life at its very roots is a paradox since, to gain it, we must first be ready to lose it, and this paradox implies no mere religious but a profound psychological truth. But such considerations aside, the one fact so to be emphasized is, that when we deal with any phenomenon of human experience, we must consider not in its abstraction, but in a variety of delicate relations, each of which lends to it a distinct aspect. And the insistence upon nicety in distinctions and the avoidance of the rough and crude is particularly essential when dealing with art, for here as nowhere, delicacy, grace, and the indefinable enter everywhere. Why, then, has painting been termed a representative art when, in the bulk of its constituent interests,



it is not representative but presentative? My answer is, that the street rather than the studio shaped this designation; for painting is representative in the erroneous meaning of this term, only when it attempts to counterfeit things along lines that are inconsistent with its many other independent aims and interests. Legitimately treated, portraiture may constitute an interest in painting equal to any other; but just as color in a given work of art may be either a central or a subordinate interest, so representation may be either a peg upon which artists suspend other beauties, or, when duly balanced, a central interest. Yet in this respect, representation can never compete with light, color, line, or space; for they, in their full exposition, are cognate to the materials of painting in a way that a living, breathing, thinking, and feeling individual never can be. A painter, knowing the possibilities and the limitations of his art, and inclined like any other man to put forth his best strength and conceal his limitations, will set forth his art's rich inward abundance, not its patent deformities or shortcomings. This line of development has always characterized the best works in painting, even when an artist was compelled to make concessions to the uninformed. To the uninformed, then, painting became a representative art, even while painters depicted its more unique and brilliant beauties in forms that only the seeing eye could, with them, enjoy.

But the actual material of painting has been obscured not only by the restricted vision of the layman but by the usual viewpoint of the theorist. I refer to the habit of describing art in terms of feeling, thought,

life, nature, etc. Thus John LaFarge, the painter, writes that "the man," not the material apparently, "is the main question." "There is no such thing if by painting we mean the representation of what can be noticed or seen." Painting, he goes on to say, by means of a variety of illustrations that I have not space to quote, is an artist's "*manner of looking* at the thing that he copies." This, of course, in its abstraction, cannot "be noticed or seen," a circumstance which helps to explain what he means when he states, as already quoted, that "there is no such thing if by painting we mean the representation of what can be noticed or seen." Thus, in a stroke, all the constituent elements of painting are extinguished by a painter who turns a faulty philosophical eye upon that which he, in his actual achievements, paints with no other than an artistic eye. In a word, he would seem to hold that when we write about painting we must look at it out of the back of the head; the eyes to the front are to be used only for painting, not for its theory.

In Duncan Phillips' book on "*The Enchantment of Art*," we read that "Feeling is the soul of art. Technique is only its machinery. It is, therefore, the appreciation of life \* \* \* that is the exalted purpose of all art criticism."

"The appreciation of life," he goes on to say, "is not that worth while? Not life in the abstract, but our *own* lives, our *own* experiences, our *own* moods and emotions." \* \* That is, it is not color, light and shade, space and lines that we enjoy in a painting, but our own inward emotions. Again, as in the previous illus-

\* \* Page 18; the italics are not mine.

tration, we find abstract subjectivism run riot, and painting left to shift the best it can for its actual recognition. An artist does not create feeling, but he evokes it by creating something else, and the relation that exists between the thing he creates and the feeling it evokes needs careful adjustment, as much as do the relations between representation and the other elements already enlarged upon.

I turn to a third critic for another typical statement. With Ruskin, art is primarily a matter of rendering nature faithfully. "The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed."<sup>24</sup> What he means here is that an artist, particularly a landscapist, must accurately follow nature in producing his work. If he does, he has achieved truth; if, in addition, he accomplishes his end by a maximum accumulation in exact observation and execution, then he has achieved "the greatest number of great ideas." The assumption is: What nature does, is not that worth while? Hence, copy nature, and, in so doing, achieve for painting, by a borrowed glory, the only beauty it can achieve.

One might, of course, fill a book with extracts of this order. It is the common vernacular of critics. Sometimes, of course, they may speak of painting as the embodiment of perfection or of beauty in their abstract and wholly unilluminated meaning. But the philosophical trend in all these varied phases retains the same vicious tendency, the conversion of painting into a thing other than itself.

<sup>24</sup> Modern Painters, Vol. I, p. 83.

Why, for example, should painting be enjoyed solely for its resemblance to nature? Is color in nature, for example, a more sacred or privileged sort of existence than color wherever it may appear? Does not nature breed disease and deformity as well as health and beauty? Or, to state the matter differently, do we enjoy nature, among other things, for the sake of her color or do we enjoy color solely because nature (whatever that may be) produces it? Or again: is not color, as it appears in nature, the expression of the same order of phenomena, under the control of the same laws, as when it appears in painting? And if these questions are pertinent, why should not the beautiful rendering of color on a canvas be as direct and as independent a source of interest as color in a natural landscape? Not nature but the phenomenon of color with its own inherent laws, is the ultimate fact of reference, whether color appears in the one place or the other. Thus painting, by its many constituent elements, constitutes a new form of reality and an independent source of pleasure, and what it should and can do is determined, not by what something else should and can do, but what painting constituted as it is with its own set of qualities, limitations, and possibilities, is competent and able to do. And it is here where critics should take their stand. It is for them to tell us whether a given artist, within the conditions reflected in art-history and in its material, has made as much of them as is attainable in the way of a pictorial production. It is here where the critic should single out merits and defects. He, however, abandons his role of critic and adopts that of a pseudo-philosopher

when, instead, he asks how painting comes to hold the interest and admiration of man, or what relation it sustains to other forms of reality. Nor can a philosopher proceed in his special task until the critic has properly executed his. Yet, when the philosopher, as well as the general layman, asks the critic what in painting constitute its special elements of beauty and merit, Duncan Phillips, to cite an instance, repeats a typical answer: "Art is *feeling*." I object; and, instead, I speak of painting in terms of some excellence in color, light and shade, space, etc. He replies: "The appreciation of life, is not that worth while?" And I answer: "Life in what form?" for unless we define the *form* of life, we use a word with no special meaning. Suppose, then, that we attempt to define the *particular* form that life assumes in the enjoyment of painting. In that event, we would soon see, if we knew anything at all about psychology and philosophy, that the *form* of life in question would be determined, not by a generalized abstract conception of *feeling*, but by the particular *perceptive* elements constituting painting; and, as such, arousing and determining in us that order or group of feelings of which painting, as a matter of color, light, and shade, is capable. I expounded this subject at length in Chapter II, as well as elsewhere, and a fuller return to it, I feel certain, is not justified.

## II

How is the full substantive value of each element in painting determined? In answering this question,

I shall confine attention to a half-dozen of the elements enumerated, although, in an exhaustive account, the examination should be extended to all the elements.

When we make the elements in their substantive aspect the aim of an inquiry, it is necessary to consider them in their mutual relation, in their separate effect upon things in general, and in their effects upon a psychophysical individual. The inquiry, then, demands that we deal with painting in the concrete form of its historic development; that we reasonably exhaust the number of elements that compose it; and that we indicate the changing effect upon them of each of the three relations mentioned. The inquiry has its purpose in a desire to establish the full substantive nature of painting so as to control and justify man's devotion to it. The research, of course, does not aim to displace, but to support and to control the critic in his business to determine excellence or beauty in painting. In fact, the inquiry could not even properly be instituted until the critic had discharged his function. Its direct value for the critic does not begin until he attempts to prove the significance of his art, or until such problems arise as are engendered by the rival contentions of the different schools; namely, whether the relative union of the elements, with this element rather than that in the ascendant, or a new one, more lately and variously incorporated, is less or more affective, than some other group or treatment of them. In the solution of such matters, the critic's only reference, apart from history and technical expediency, would be the one that is bound up with such an organized body of knowledge as this

and the succeeding division of my exposition is intended to outline. The experimental psychologist in a sense anticipated this inquiry in some of its aspects; but as I have already shown in detail in a previous chapter, he not only fails to perceive the special aim and the full scope of the problem, but he in large part neutralizes even such results as he achieves by a curious confusion of problems and by his inadequate or rather incorrect conception of art and psychology. In my criticism of his method I enlarged upon these defects.<sup>1</sup> What I expect to do, then, is to prepare anew the ground for this necessary æsthetic research, hoping it will induce the specialist, and the many eager students in the field, to carry it on to a more final conclusion.

### LIGHT

Comprehensively studied, the substantive value of a thing is measured by either or both of two factors; its effect upon other things; and its effect upon a psychophysical individual in his large variety of differences, native and tutored. Light, therefore, must be considered in its effect upon the other pictorial elements, upon things in general, and upon a variable psychophysical individual.

Every picture, if we take the history of art as our sole guide, must have the tonality of a single light unless it as distinctly incorporates more than one. Colors exist only in light, change here their tints and shades, and vanish as they sink into darkness. A canvas is usually divided into planes of high, low,

<sup>1</sup> Chapter IV, pp. 63-79.

and middle light, and every other element that enters undergoes an appropriate modification, whether it be color, drawing, figures, modelling, mass, or movement. The light, of course, may be of one positive hue or another, whereby a whole new series of subtleties would be created in the other incorporated elements. Light even penetrates the shadows and, thereby, not only lends them a spatial perspective, but fills them with glowing and luminous color or with rich and delicate modelling. It is not surprising, then, that light should have differentiated its existence from that of color, and, from handmaiden, raised itself to the level of ruling queen: "The principal person in a picture is the light."

In its general interest, light is valued less for its effect upon other things than for its general effect upon us, although it may be valued for the security it insures against the many perils bound up with darkness; for its necessity to sight, movement, and action; for its general effects on vegetable growth; for the production of colors; and for many other benefits. A poem taken from the ancient Vedic literature glorifies light for its many outward blessings so simply and graphically that I shall quote it.

#### TO THE DAWN

"She shines upon us like a young wife, rousing every living being to go to his work. The fire had to be kindled by men; she brought light by striking down darkness.



"She rose up, spreading far and wide, and moving toward every one. She grew in brightness, wearing her brilliant garment. The mother of the cows (of the morning clouds), the leader of the days, she shone gold-colored, lovely to behold.

"She the fortunate, who brings the eye of the god, who leads the white and lovely steed (of the sun), the Dawn was seen, revealed by her rays, with brilliant treasures she follows every one.

"Thou, who are a blessing when thou art near, drive away the unfriendly; make the pastures wide, give us safety! Remove the haters, bring treasures! Raise up wealth to the worshipper, O thou mighty Dawn.

"Shine for us with thy best rays, thou bright Dawn, thou who lengthenest our life, thou the love of all, who givest us food, who givest us wealth in cows, horses, and chariots.

"Thou, daughter of the sky, thou high-born Dawn, whom the Vāsishtas magnify with songs, give us riches high and wide, all ye gods, protect us always with your blessing!

Light, psychophysically, is exciting. Consider the effects of a bright day after a succession of dark ones. At such times, we draw it anew into our lives like a thing of marvellous splendor, and then cling to it as if we never again would let it go. Its effect upon us may be further measured by the fact that light is made synonymous with knowledge, truth, and wisdom, just as its opposite, darkness, is made synony-

F. M. Mueller, A History of Sanskrit Literature, pp. 551 and 552.

mous with death, evil, and ignorance. Its very being is instinct with what is vital. With air and food, it presents the threefold basis of life; and, like them, it has been embraced in therapeutics. Dwelling in a jewel, it animates even matter; flitting here and there, it breathes of freedom and playfulness; and, in its magic effects upon water, land, or air, it produces a thousand new enchantments. Should we wonder, then, that light and sunlight, with its wealth of associations born of man's needs and desire, his sensibility and education, should be valued in a painting? Light is as natural a product of color as color is of light; and light, as we have already shown, presents the same relative appearance upon a canvas as in nature at large. Many an artist, such as Turner, for example, has made the painting of light his chief, all-controlling end, and it is the translucent play of light in a shadowy depth or hazy atmosphere that easily constitutes *the* style, as well as the poetry, of men like Rembrandt and Corot. Modern painting is largely a matter of light and shade, so that light is present in every canvas even when not deliberately depicted for its own sake. Those artists who make light the central interest are termed luminarists. Those who bring the effect of shadow into equal prominence with the effect of light, are termed chiaroscurists.

### COLOR

The attractive power of color extends to the whole of animate existence and its effects extend even to the stimulation of the muscular and circulatory sys-

tems. The exciting properties of red upon some animals are well known. But experiments have shown that all types of animal life are sensitive to color, and that they react in different ways upon different colors. "Thus the amoeba turns away from blue, as it does from white light, but does not turn from red. One experimenter placed an equal number of earthworms in two boxes, one light, the other dark, with an opening between, and the number in each box was counted every hour. It was found after a time that there were five times as many worms in the light box as in the dark. In an exactly similar way it was shown, that they preferred red to green, and green to blue. Yet earthworms probably receive their light impression through the skin, it being doubtful whether they have any visual organs proper. If such low types of animal life feel differently towards different colors, we shall not be surprised to find that the highly sensitive human organism is also directly affected by colors, apart from their associations. \* \* \* When we come to test the color preferences of very young children we find that it is the more stimulating colors that are preferred. Several careful experimenters have concluded that infants of a year old, or even as young as seven months, already show a marked preference for red and yellow before other colors, and even before white, though infants are notoriously attracted by brightness."<sup>5</sup>

Experiments performed upon adults have given rise to similar conclusions; namely, that colors directly excite man, although his preference for one color over

<sup>5</sup> Valentine, *Experimental Psychology of Beauty*, pp. 12-13.

another is variable, subject, as such preference of necessity is, to differences in education, association, or national and individual idiosyncrasies. Although aware of these influences in a vague way only, man early utilized color on a large scale in his general habits of life, on his person, or in his environment, symbolism, speech, and dress. The results, as already indicated, lead to the conclusion that colors have a most marked substantive reality. In fact the testimony yielded both by artists and scientists is in accord with the opinion of the general observer, that colors assume the attributes of a character at once positive and individual: one color is cold and another warm, one is heavy and another light, one is cheerful, another sad, one is bold and another gentle. Such results are not to be explained by mere affection due to association, however numerous and varied in character; nor by dynamogenics in its purely reflex character. In addition, it is necessary to indicate the effect of conation upon man's sensitiveness to color. Man naturally desires what affects him agreeably, and what he desires, he inevitably seeks. Hence a natural sensitiveness for color may, under the influence of conation (education) be raised to a capacity for enjoyment little grasped or realized by one who lacks similar training and development. Thus the degree in which the chromatic beauties of nature delight a lover of nature, is scarcely conceivable by those not similarly trained or constituted, and colors in painting attract as powerfully and as directly as they do in nature. In fact, colors in paintings often possess the superior advantage, due to quality and to

the fact that they are carefully differentiated and juxtaposed under the control of many recognized laws present in their general perception. Such laws aid artists not only in the proper juxtaposition of colors, but also in enhancing their natural effect to a degree not otherwise or elsewhere attainable. This wealth of exquisite enjoyment is the direct product of a refined and expanded sensibility educated under the motive-power of human desire.

Color, obviously, is basic in its relation to the other pictorial elements, but it need not, withal, be central in interest. Thus Ruskin, even while ranking Turner among the great colorists of the world, maintains that his system of color was kept in entire subordination to his interest in light and shade. "I have shown," he writes, "the inferiority and unimportance in nature of color as a truth, compared with light and shade. That inferiority is maintained and asserted by all really great works of color, but most by Turner's, as their color is most intense. Whatever brilliancy he may choose to assume, is subjected to an inviolable law of chiaroscuro, from which there is no appeal. No richness nor depth of tint is considered of value enough to atone for the loss of one particle of arranged light. No brilliancy of hue is permitted to interfere with the depth of a determined shadow."<sup>6</sup>

An artist, however, notwithstanding the bias expressed by Ruskin, may give a foremost place to color, even while violating light and shade or some other principle fundamental to painting. When an artist's interest is thus specialized, or when he achieves

<sup>6</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. I, p. 275.

a quality in color-harmony of rare excellence, he is termed a colorist; "but how difficult of achievement is color-harmony may be indicated by simply reciting the names of the colorists during the last four or five centuries. From the years, one might think the number would be large, but in reality among the thousands of painters who have lived and produced and died we may count the great colorists on our fingers. They are Titian, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, Rubens, Velasquez, Delacroix, and perhaps some few others who had the color-sense—the inclination rather than the consummation—like Rembrandt and Chardin. The small number may be accounted for perhaps on the score that there is always a paucity of genius; but it may also argue another point, namely, that color-harmony is not yet fundamentally comprehended, and hence is exceedingly difficult to produce even by men of genius. Claims have been put forth at different times by different people who have thought they possessed its basic secret, but no one of them has yet given a satisfactory working explanation of it."<sup>7</sup>

But even if color is not the only specialized interest in painting, it is, notwithstanding, the *basic* principle, for every other element in painting—whether it be a line, light, or shade, a figure or space—as naturally rises out of it as vapor, snow, or ice, with all their individual differences, may be said to rise out of water. For what, after all, is a line (in painting) but the termination or boundary of a color; and what are light and shade, but the change in the specific

<sup>7</sup> J. C. Van Dyke, *Art for Art's Sake*, pp. 41-42.

quality of a color either in the direction of white or in the direction of black; or what, again, is a figure, but a pigment-complex particularized as color, lines, light, shade, and perspective? Color, then, is fundamental to painting, not only for the endless variety and excellence that it offers man in his refined and intensified craving for color, but also for the capacity, so uniquely possessed by it, to create a new order of existence—the visual world in its specialized and differentiated edition. Here man truly becomes the rival of God, and in this rivalry, he sometimes falls short, but he also, quite as often, excels Him here in His own handiwork.

Ruskin offers a brief passage in which is well summarized some of the intricate requirements in the pictorial use of color. Color must indicate, "first, the exact relief and relation of objects against and to each other in substance and darkness, as they are nearer or more distant, and the perfect relation of the shades of all of them to the chief light of the picture, whether that be sky, water, or anything else. Secondly, the exact relation of the colors of the shadows to the colors of the light, so that they may be at once felt to be merely different degrees of the same light; and the accurate relation among the illuminated parts themselves with respect to the degree in which they are influenced by the color of the light itself, whether warm or cold; so that the whole of the picture (or where several tones are united, those parts of it which are under each), may be felt to be in one climate, under one kind of light, and in one kind of atmosphere; this being chiefly dependent on that peculiar and

inexplicable quality of each color laid on, which makes the eye feel both what is the actual color of the object represented, and that it is raised to its apparent pitch by illumination. A very bright brown, for instance, out of sunshine, may be precisely of the same shade of color as a very dead or cold brown in sunshine, but it will be totally different in *quality*; and that quality by which the illuminated dead color would be felt in nature different from the unilluminated bright one, is what artists are perpetually aiming at, and connoisseurs talking nonsense about, under the name of 'tone.' The want of tone in pictures is caused by objects looking bright in their own positive hue, and not by illumination."<sup>8</sup>

#### REPRESENTATION, OR THE PRODUCTION OF SPECIFIC FIGURES

Is representation a fundamental demand of our nature? If so, its substantive nature and presence in painting would be explained from the standpoint of general interest. But before we consider it from this standpoint, let us turn to the effect of representation on the other pictorial elements. This I have already partially touched upon. Representation (figures) yields the rational basis in the development and arrangement of lines in all their curious power, charm, and rhythm; it conditions the varied play of light and shade; favors, in major part, the development of space, lends a ready basis for gradation in color; and yields the one supreme basis for modell-

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<sup>8</sup> Modern Painters, Vol. I, pp. 236-237.



ing, drawing, and design. Moreover, when carefully chosen, representations raise the general key or mood of a picture, and, thereby, become integral parts of the whole rather than mere pegs for the suspension of other pictorial beauties; for figures usually possess their own ideational or emotional significance, and these may be utilized, as we have stated, to increase or decrease the general effect of a picture. Not to utilize them in this positive way, reflects a limitation, since, as we have shown, the rational basis of much in painting is clearly and inevitably dependent upon its figures. "Art," writes Lasar, "does not consist in giving a particular touch or tone, but in interpreting nature, whether figure or landscape, in all its varying moods and conditions; so that each picture is distinct in its charm of light and air as well as in its form. All must harmonize."

In its more abstract phase, representation is a matter of geometrical forms and mass. Miss Puffer, referring to the triangle, writes "that the contrast between the broad base and the apex gives a feeling of solidity, of repose; and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that the tendency to rest the eyes above the center of the picture directly induces the associated mood of reverence and worship. Thus the pyramidal form [in its use by the religious painters of the Renaissance] serves two ends; primarily that of giving unity, and, secondarily, by the peculiarity of its shape, that of inducing the feeling-tone appropriate to the subject of the picture. A *square* resting on its side conveys the impression of solidity and strength." "The vista in landscape," she adds, in another place,

"serves to concentrate attention and to hold together those parts of the picture which are associated in the vista."<sup>9</sup>

But let us now ask the next question: What is the psychological foundation of this interest? The instinct to imitate has been recognized in its many varied results by prominent exponents of modern psychology. It is regarded by them as central in many phases of man's natural, social, and intellectual development. Their observations have crystallized in the claim, long since maintained by Aristotle, that man is the most imitative of creatures; and such special leaders as Baldwin and Tarde affirmed that imitation is the most inclusive of man's natural tendencies.

Love for representation, then, through its alliance with imitation, is deep-seated; but this instinct does not yield its only basis. Many people, it is true, possess a mania for photographs of places, themselves, and friends, and all are responsive to photographs in some form or other. But drawings and representations are, also, constantly employed to "picture vividly" what may be merely told or written. Thus the "movies" indicate not only how easily representations attract, but how vividly they can be made to portray scenes of which the drama alone can be taken as a rival. In ordinary speech, "grasping" a thing is made synonymous with "picturing" it. It is not surprising, then, that painting, with its admirably suited conditions, should have given a large place to representation. There is little doubt, in fact, that

<sup>9</sup> Psychology of Beauty.

painting took its origin in "picture-making" rather than in some of the other elements which now all but dominate it.

From the standpoint of representation as central, the following classification of paintings might be offered:

- |           |                 |
|-----------|-----------------|
| I Story   | (a) Religious   |
|           | (b) Secular     |
| II Figure | (a) Still Life  |
|           | (b) Animal Life |
|           | (c) Portraits   |

III Landscape. Here the dominant interest may be of a varied character with and without the distinction of an independent sub-head. "In modern art, landscape is clearly differentiated as an independent type; but in medieval and renaissance art there was no such separation of landscape from portrait and figure painting \* \* \*. The chief excellence of landscape lies in the feeling which it gives for atmosphere and space."<sup>10</sup>

#### IV Marine.

V Arabesque. "The most characteristic thing about modern painting is the tendency to minimize the importance of any special subject. Whether a picture expresses a personality, or stirs religious emotion is less important than whether it makes an agreeable impression of line and mass and color \* \* \*. This means for the painter that condition in which the hue, brightness, and situation of a color are determined only by the question of harmony with other colors, and not by any question of imitative accuracy. The name which Whistler gave his compositions, as 'Nocturne in Blue and Gold' and 'Harmony in Gray and Green', sufficiently indicate his concurrence in this ideal."<sup>11</sup>

## SPACE

The third dimension in painting opens up a field of varied possibility and enjoyment. It is, to be sure, a construction; but space in ordinary experience

<sup>10</sup> K. Gordon, *Esthetics*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

is also a construction, based upon facts that are patiently laid bare and utilized by painters. Some of the more obvious means of suggesting distance are secured by the partial concealment of objects; by the apparent, as opposed to the actual, magnitude of an object; by the greater or less predominance of the ærial color above the usual color of an object; by change of color in the illuminated masses of air; and by the use of shadows. The horizontal surfaces and the inclination of the ground are indicated by a proper distribution of well-known surface objects, as houses, trees, etc.

The effect of space upon some of the other pictorial elements is indicated by the elements just mentioned as present in its construction,—light and shade, color gradations, objects and their proper arrangement, atmospheric effects, and such additional elements as would naturally follow in the development of these. It follows, that the more careful the elaboration of each of the elements involved, the more successful will be the rendering of space. The effects that space produces in a picture are akin to those produced upon us by space in nature,—the effects of an expansive vision, roominess, and atmosphere, whether chromatic or poetic. “We do not conceive Nature with the eye alone nor from a single point of view, but rather as something always changing, always in motion, to be taken in by all our senses at once.  
\* \* \* We live and move with a consciousness of space surrounding us even when there are in fact scarcely any spatial suggestions in that which our eyes chance to perceive. We do not ask how this

consciousness comes about. \* \* \* Nor do we demand of the perception that it shall demonstrate to us its spatial attributes, each time anew. And yet this consciousness of the existence of space is present even when we close our eyes. Pictorial representation has for its purpose the awakening of this idea of space, and exclusively by the factors which the artist presents. The more emphatically the artist demonstrates in his picture the volume of space, and the more positive the spatial suggestions contained in its perception, the more living and vivid is the effect which the picture affords."<sup>12</sup>

Space, either in its direct or in its auxiliary interest, has become so prominent in modern painting that its older and conventionalized treatment has given way to its more accurate construction as based upon careful observation. Ruskin extols Turner for three special achievements: his accurate observation and vivid rendering of space; his marvelous portrayal of glowing light; and his ready subordination to them of his rare color-sense and his masterful modelling of form.

#### LINES AND FORM

For the casual observer, there is something plain, meagre, neutral in the appearance of a line in its contrast to the obviously rich, solid, and glowing appearance of a color. That we should be fascinated by color, or that we should show preference for one over another, seems both natural and comprehensible; but, to the average man, it must sound somewhat

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<sup>12</sup> Adolf Hildebrand, *Problem of Form*, pp. 48-49.

fantastic to hear another rave over a line. That a man may, however, be thus honestly and deeply fascinated, is shown by the fact that many artists of the greatest eminence, the Florentines, for example, are, by clear choice and preference, draughtsmen rather than colorists. Having experienced the wizardry of the line, they would rather follow it in its thousand mysteries and problems than they would those of color. Moreover, careful drawing imparts a quality to painting which color, not thus aided, could never begin to reach. Such qualities must actually be seen before they can be felt, and ocular evidence of the fact is not readily obtained in a casual experience. But this lack in our general experience explains why we do not perceive an expressive and, often, a really magic power in a line-combination; and why ninety-nine out of a hundred perceive and appreciate color in a picture (and this even is not so obvious as the wholly uninitiated may think) to one in a hundred who accurately perceives and appreciates its lines and abstract form.

In his treatment of *lines*, the experimental psychologist commits two errors. He stresses the *beauty* rather than the *substantive* character of lines, and the line in its *isolation*, not in its *combination*, whereas lines are never properly understood except in combination. It is here alone that lines engender a power that grips us with that same sense of a fruitless resistance that we experience in the well-known sphere of line-illusion. Extend this more common phenomenon, as general psychology ordinarily presents it, to its wider, unexpected, and more subtle

operation in drawing, etching, and painting, and then we will at least have our problem correctly before us, whatever its rationale. In fact, this whole order of experience, which the familiar examples of line-illusion typify, is less a matter of traceable associations than an independent form of reality as ultimate and as distinct in character as color. Hence the most elaborated psychological explanation never reaches this experience in that strange tyranny which it exerts over an individual. The subject of line-combination presents its suggestive phases, not in psychology, but in what we term the principles and technique of drawing; and, for an ocular demonstration of the features noted, any ready hand-book on the subject will amply suffice.

A line, when reduced to its lowest terms, yields an alphabet. First we have the straight and the curved line, with the triple division of the former into the horizontal, the vertical, and the oblique. A straight or curved line is either regular or irregular. These simple elements, by virtue of their inexhaustible combination and division, can, in the hands of a master draughtsman, be brought to such a high degree of expression as often to make the other aspects of painting, by comparison, seem trite and flabby. For, although the language of color is as direct as the language of line, yet it is the line that yields an incisiveness and, what is more, a tyranny, unknown in any mere appreciation of color. As it appears in painting, a line may have a round edge, a square edge, or a flat edge, but blur the edge, and drawing with its crispness vanishes from a painting, leaving in its

wake, perchance, beautiful harmonies in color or "noble passages of light," but nothing wherein color may vie with line in the production of that joint result which neither by itself is able to accomplish. Artists that follow the line rather than color, are often called classicists and academicians; for they, like the musician, have and utilize a vast tradition in a mathematical form, and here mediocrity may easily be swamped; whereas the others, of necessity more directly influenced by immediate perception than by formulas, may be embraced under the one wide term of impressionism.

In their treatment of the elements, psychologists have brought together a few commonplaces from the field of art and added one contribution of their own. Some of the commonplaces more or less habitually presented are, that a fine gray line suggests delicacy; a fine black line, precision and hardness; and broad rough lines, homeliness and solidity; horizontal lines, quiescence and repose; vertical lines, aspiration; oblique lines, action; and curved lines, a sense of voluptuousness. Hogarth, who in a sense is responsible for the problem of the line as it appears in æsthetics, held the serpentine or wavy line as the "line of grace." "In general," L. Witmer asserts, "curved lines have greater æsthetic value than straight lines. A gradual curve upward to the right is perhaps the most pleasing line. It is also the line that best accords with the relative ease of natural and acquired movements of attention. Next in order is a curved line downward and to the right. Following this, in ease of exploitation and in æsthetic value, is a curved line upward and to the left. A line downward and



to the left satisfies least the requirements of apperception and æsthetic appreciation. \* \* \* Other æsthetic demands will of necessity modify and may even completely antagonize those which have been here presented."<sup>13</sup>

The "golden section," it is generally affirmed, represents the most satisfactory of all proportions. It is such a division of a line that the smaller part is to the larger as the larger part is to the whole;  $a : b :: b : a + b$ .

Such generalizations, no doubt, are true as far as they go. They give evidence of the fact that a line, even as an *isolated* element, has more substantive value and more individuality than is commonly supposed. The method psychologists adopt in the explanation of lines, is also sound; they hold that a complex psychophysical agent is integrated in the proper solution of their full substantive reality. In so far, however, as they neglect to determine the substantive reality of the elements in their complex as well as in their elementary forms, in such forms as drawing, etching, and painting present, they, by omission, not only contract their own special problem, but hopelessly confuse it with problems wholly irrelevant. Their duty, when still more broadly conceived, is to discover absolutely new combinations in expressive line-production, or, where this creative capacity is impossible, at least to keep up their pace with and to make luminous, such combinations as are the mere stock-in-trade of any draughtsman.

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<sup>13</sup>L. Witmer, *Analytical Psychology*, p. 85.

## DESIGN AND COMPOSITION

A painting does not merely consist of plural elements, it also presents, within limits, a reciprocal arrangement and unification of them. It is in this feature architectonic, and the applicable terms are composition and design. The term composition, in a narrow meaning, also signifies the technical procedure in the application of the pigments; whereas the term design denotes the existence of an aim or purpose underlying the technical or pictorial result. A work, therefore, that is lacking in proper execution or cohesion is said to suffer in composition and design; and the feeling that is thus induced is one of disgust or bewilderment. At their best, design and composition in painting represent a high order of pleasure. They enable us to pass from the parts to the whole or from the whole to the parts with a sense of their ocular fitness and finality not easily attainable in any other sphere of human endeavor. In addition, design in painting is valued for the same general reason for which it is valued in life as a whole; it represents the power of mind to transform the adverse elements of existence, a chaos, into a thing of law and order. In this respect, design in painting denotes nothing peculiar; it is present in all forms of human conquest over the forces of darkness and destruction, in the triumph of truth over error, virtue over sin, health over disease, or beauty over ugliness and deformity. And our delight in the technical aspect of composition is akin to our delight in any form of mere physical accomplishment. For these

reasons, design and composition are a source of as much direct pleasure in painting as our interest in light, color, drawing, etc. When each of these many elements are brought to *their* perfection of expression, we have what is termed *beauty* of painting.

### III

The constructive principles of painting, the subject of this division, originate with the substantive elements in their *individual* and in their *joint* development. We must, accordingly, answer two questions: (1) What are the principles that are present in the fuller development of each element; and (2) What are the principles present in their joint development? Naturally in a field such as painting, where the elements differ in their degree of relative independence, we cannot with uniform success keep the two problems separate. Drawing, for example, exists as an independent art; and colors, too, may have a highly developed form with no other conscious factors present except, possibly, light and shade; whereas light and shade, without color, have no possible form of existence. The complete dependence of space-construction upon the other elements is equally patent. A separate investigation, then, of such elements as space or light and shade, although both legitimate and necessary, would, nevertheless, invade the sphere proposed by the second question. On the other hand, it is precisely in virtue of the greater independence enjoyed by color and lines that their separate investigation may be started with little or no direct relevancy

to painting; and it is precisely for this reason that the bulk of the work by psychologists on the subject of lines and color has little direct relevancy to painting. They set out on a minor scale to establish the physical and psychological principles involved in *color-harmony*, but color-harmony, unfortunately, does not even suggest the large and varied operation of color in painting. Color is not only affected by, but is also directly and indirectly productive of all the other elements in painting,—light and shade, atmosphere, textures, surfaces, even lines, mass, space, and form,—and these elements, both in their isolation and in their combination, create new problems in the handling of color. The same facts, of course, apply to the pictorial manipulation of the line, both in its bearing upon other lines and in its bearing upon all the other elements constituent of painting. Here, then, is an opportunity for large scientific inquiry and discovery that, properly conducted, would serve to enrich or confirm the best practices of the best artists. Up to date, artists have been the only progressive investigators of the many problems in this varied field. Who, for example, if set the task of mastering the art of drawing, would bother much with the psychologist? And drawing, when once merged with color, has possibilities in the way of new discoveries which redound to both elements. The history of art is full in its evidence of such discovery and development; whereas psychology, on these points, is full of vagrant confusion.

Constructive principles, as they reflect themselves in painting, may be classified as material, technical,

conventional, and psychological. Their existence and inevitableness in painting is my sole excuse for again elaborating in some detail one of its constituent elements. Since color is the most basic of these elements, it will also prove the most fruitful in furthering, in an abridged account, our present aim. It will not be necessary here to classify each principle, as it appears, as material, conventional, technical, or psychological, and it is particularly unnecessary so to classify the first three. Common usage makes no rigid distinction in its usual employment of the terms. Hence I shall follow usage and avoid the confusing complication of an additional issue.

### COLORS

There are six colors, red, yellow, blue, green, orange, and violet. The first three are termed simple or primary, and the second three, composite or binary. The latter are termed composite, for the reason of their possible derivation from the first three. White and black, commonly, are not regarded as colors.

Each of the colors has its own distinctive quality or hue, namely, the quality it possesses at the point of its full saturation. The hue of each color, however, under the influence of light and shade, is susceptible of much variation in the direction of new tints or shades. The tints and shades of a color are largely, but not uniformly, referred to under the term *value*, and the dominant or pervading hue as *tone*. *Tint* implies that a given color contains more light, and *shade* that it contains less light than is reflected in its

distinctive hue at its point of saturation. It must be noted, however, that the luminous intensity of the different hues is not equal. Thus red, orange, and yellow have a greater luminous intensity than green, blue, or violet. This distinction in the original luminosity of colors has given rise to their studio-division into warm and cool tones; and their natural difference is accentuated by associations; red, orange, and yellow, for example, bearing a close approximation to the color of fire or sunlight. In virtue of this variation in luminosity, a mixture of colors will bring about the same effects in tints and shades as the direct introduction or withdrawal of colorless light.

Colors are also said to differ in their apparent weight. "The weight idea of color is unreflective and immediate. \* \* \* A golden yellow looks light \* \* \* and a rich blue looks heavy." In general, we may say that the index of weight changes with the luminosity of a color. It is also affirmed, but not so generally recorded, that some colors seem to project forward whereas others seem to recede. "Blue backgrounds always come forward; every other color may be made to go back, more successfully." "Yellow, red, and brown are colors that produce depth. The contrary is true of white, blue, and black."<sup>14</sup> Such facts are of vital concern in the technical structure of painting.

An additional problem should be considered at this point. Do colors in their isolated contemplation engender fixed differences in attractiveness? This question, from the standpoint of painting, is idle, but

<sup>14</sup> C. A. Lasar, *Practical Hints for Art Students*.

experimental psychologists, apparently, attach to it much importance, since, in their investigations of color, they have given it central prominence. We need not burden ourselves with the huge mass of statistics that have been thus compiled. It is sufficient to say that, in general, the results of each investigator diverge from those of others. This fact they themselves recognize and confess; but, undaunted by failure, they, like the Schoolmen of old, count the human beings, instead of the angels that are said to dance on the point of their imaginary needle. J. Jastrow is credited for including the greatest number of subjects in his investigations; he examined 4500 individuals, 60% men and 40% women. "The following colors were used: red, red-orange, orange, orange-yellow, yellow, yellow-green, green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet, violet, and violet-red, together with the tint of each. As a result of the experiment, Jastrow found that the first place for single colors was held by blue. Second, and a rather poor second, at that, was red. Following these came in order light blue, blue violet, red-violet, and light red-violet. *The colors rather than the tints were quite generally chosen. Also, there was an unmistakable tendency to prefer the primary colors rather than the transitional ones.*"<sup>15</sup> (The italics are mine.) The italicized portion of this extract is particularly noteworthy as being the very opposite of what actually obtains in the practice of painting.

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<sup>15</sup> As quoted by H. F. Adams, *Advertising and its Mental Laws*, p. 251.

Such, briefly, are the general characteristics of color. Let us now consider them in their mutual combination and development. Colors in mutual combination possess three chief characteristics. First, all colors have their complementaries. Secondly, since they affect each other with light or shade, they are divided into warm and cool tones. Thirdly, colors in their juxtaposition are regarded as harmonious, opposite, or contrasting. Thus, "in Chevreul's phraseology, combinations of cold colors change each other's peculiar hue the most, and of warm colors the least; because the complementaries of these cold colors are warm colors, i. e., bright, and each appearing on the field of the neighboring cold color, seems to fade it out; while the complementaries of the juxtaposed warm colors are not bright, and do not have sufficient strength to affect their neighbors at all."<sup>16</sup> Colors are in greatest opposition when they show the least tendency to combine without destruction, whether in hue or brilliancy or transparency. Colors are said to be complementary when, by mixing, they become white. Some of the principal pairs are red and blue-green, green and purple, orange and blue.

Colors in combination have both a physical and psychological foundation. The physical conditions may, for our purpose, be ignored. The psychological conditions, however, are pertinent and illuminating. The first is, that a mixture in colors may take place optically as well as physically; and it is for this reason that the actual perception of a color is always influenced by its neighboring context. This principle may even

<sup>16</sup> E. D. Puffer, *Psychology of Beauty*, p. 98.



influence the application of the pigments to a canvas. We may, for example, mix them before applying them to a canvas, or we may paint one over the other, or we may apply them in a net-work of interlacing dots. The latter method, in particular, has commended itself for the increased luminosity it imparts to a color within its own particular hue. The fact that the eye, in its natural operation, engenders the complementary opposite, has also been put to large use by artists. The principle may operate positively or negatively, enhance effects or neutralize them. Thus "a painter wishing in a shadow a faint tinge of green might, by the use of red in the object, create the appearance of green in the shadow."<sup>17</sup> Such an effect may, under conditions, even acquire an added brilliancy in the color desired; whereas, in its negative use, a yellow, if placed beside green, would throw a slight indigo upon the green and to that extent neutralize or destroy it. Thus we find the psychology of sight operative not only in the achievement of special pictorial results, but also in shaping the conventions or technique in general or special vogue.

Let us now ask another question: What constitutes the best combination in our arrangement of color? In answer to this question we may apply several standards: usage in the general history of art; critical preference; and such additional standards as psychology may have to offer.

The history of art gives evidence of a varied practice. "In painting, the relief of warm colors by cool ones, or *vice versa*, has been the practice more or less

<sup>17</sup> J. C. Van Dyke, *Art for Art's Sake*, p. 47.

of all painters, and is to this day. \* \* \* Some intermix warm and cold tones, in the body of the work, as did the Venetians; and some place them side by side, as did Rubens. The manner is a matter of individual taste and cannot be reduced to rule."<sup>18</sup>

Next we have the opposition of primary colors, such as red and blue, or we may have the contrast of complementary colors; but J. C. Van Dyke seems to think that "if we do away with contrast altogether as the chief color-aim, and examine the *accord* of similar or closely related colors, we shall be nearer an understanding of harmony, though we shall not wholly account for it by any process of reasoning or logical theory."<sup>19</sup> This latter method also has among artists numerous exponents who aim, in the main, for delicacy in gradation, in contrast to the others, who strive for brilliancy or vivacity. But whatever the individual preference, the history of art would seem to teach that no single standard in the combination of colors may be taken as final. The combination adopted by any particular artist or school, however meritorious, inevitably entails some kind of sacrifice. It seems impossible to achieve a combination wherein color is to be conserved in all its diverse interests and qualities. Hence a preference for one of these qualities, or for one rather than for another of its pictorial functions, leads to the one or the other order in their historical development. Van Dyke, therefore, in attempting to assign a superiority to "the *accord* of similar or closely related colors,"

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 53

suffers as much from a one-sided dogmatism as he who would insist upon some other special combination as superior. The matter can be decided in one way only, the one which makes for richness, variety, and plurality and not the one which weakens this richness and plurality. Painting does not exist in nature with any pre-ordained measure and boundary. Its only measure and boundary is the one that is defined by the inherent laws and qualities of its many elements in their joint development. Sane preference within this field stands approved by the history of art. But within this field, many sane preferences are equally inevitable. Not to perceive this fact, is to be one-sided and dogmatic in the announcement of one's own individual taste or bias.

Now let us ask if psychology has anything more conclusive to offer in the face of this divergence among artists and their critics. In formulating their results, psychologists are concerned less with the wide and varied practices of those specially trained and skilled in delicacy of color-perception, such as artists and critics, than with the structure of the eye, of which, from the standpoint of color-perception, much that is stated is sheer speculation. Or, more blandly, they may merely rest their case upon the consensus of opinion vouchsafed by their casual "subject,"—as the victim of this method is technically termed. Here, again, their results consist in piling up statistics. Sometimes they vary the conditions under which colors are thus presented, but they seldom touch upon coloring under those specific conditions that make it relevant to its special and varied use in painting.

With their problem of color-combination thus narrowed and with their method, now, definitely stated, let us pass to their statistics. Jastrow, in the tests already alluded to, "found that there was no combination of colors which occupied the position of a decided favorite as did blue among the single colors. The two most frequently preferred combinations were red and violet, and red and blue. Third came blue and violet. \* \* \* The most generally avoided were orange and green, orange and violet, and light orange and light blue. The tints of the colors appear relatively more frequently in the color combinations than in the single color preferences, and this in particular is the case for the women."<sup>20</sup>

Tints, we were just told, occur in color-combinations oftener than in single color-preferences, especially with women. Women, then, apparently have the better color-sense, for in painting, as matter-of-fact, tints and shades all but exclude the presence of saturated colors; and in a widely practiced and accepted style, the painting of imperceptible gradations in one tone, we have no saturated hues at all. "It is not at all necessary," the critic J. C. Van Dyke writes, "that the whole register of color from red to violet should be travelled through in the attempt to gain a harmonious result. The accord of similar tints may be sufficient, provided each tint holds its proper place in the scale." It is also a fundamental canon of painting that a spot of color, however small, that does not reflect gradation, is a spot that is poor and is in no way to be tolerated. Why, then, bother in

<sup>20</sup>H. F. Adams, Advertising and its Mental Laws, p. 263

these psychological investigations, as psychologists in large measure do, with combinations of *saturated* colors? To be sure, such investigations might have some relation to painting in outlines and flat tones; but for hundreds of years the varied styles in painting have been executed, almost without exception, in light and shade. Such investigations, then, as those embraced under the following headings, are more pertinent:<sup>21</sup>

1. Combinations of tints and saturated colors.
2. Combinations of shades and saturated colors.
3. Combinations of shades with shades.
4. Combinations of tints with tints.
5. Combinations of shades with tints.
6. Combinations of tints with shades.

Color, then, early in its history, comes under the influence of "the inviolate law of *chiaroscuro*" (light and shade), even when interest in color is the artist's dominating aim. But *chiaroscuro* may itself with a variety of different motives come to the forefront on a canvas, and in each case the handling of color, naturally, would differ; nor could we, except by such reference, determine upon the fitness or unfitness of the color employed. The conventions to which *chiaroscuro* has given rise are clearly stated in the following extract:

"The early Florentine, Vienese, and Umbrian painters thought of three planes in their modelling of form,—the plane of more light, the plane of less light, and the plane of least light, and these planes were kept quite close together to avoid the sugges-

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<sup>21</sup> University of Toronto Studies, Psychological Series, Vol. II.

tion of shadows. \* \* \* Cennini speaks again and again of 'the three divisions' and describes very fully the practice of coloring in these divisions. The practice was to prepare a separate tone for each plane of the modelling." Beginning with the fifteenth century, Masaccio introduced a new system, wherein "the old idea of modelling form in three planes, all planes of the light, was given up for the new idea of modelling in two planes,—one the plane of light, the other the plane of the shadow. Having established these two planes, an effect was produced, which was unprecedented and astonishing. When the two planes were close together in the scale of values, as they were in the beginning, the form was clearly suggested. When the two planes were separated the need of additional planes was felt and they were introduced. A plane of half tones was introduced, between the plane of the light and of the shadow, a plane of higher lights was added and a plane of lower darks. In that way the form became complete. Nothing more was needed. Theoretically the form might be more completely modelled in nine planes, but to do that is technically very difficult. The details of modelling were achieved by very slight color and value differences which were found within the limits of each plane and the number of planes was rarely increased beyond five."

"Form and color were expressed in the mode of chiaroscuro from the time of Masaccio to the time of Michaelangelo and Raffæl. \* \* \* There is one more mode of expressing it and one more point of view to be considered. Living far north in a country

of less light and more darkness, the early Flemish painters conceived form as existing in darkness and coming out of darkness into light, where there was any light. The idea of the painter was to draw the object and then to show by painting whether it was in the dark or in the light, and how much in the light. That means that the number of planes in the modelling is determined by black, representing darkness, and the range of values between black and the color of the object in light or in half light or in shadow wherever the painter wanted it to be."<sup>22</sup>

Color may also acquire modification when subjected to the influence of linear and spatial development, each of which has its own fixed modes of procedure, and, in the best and most balanced of paintings, exacts from colors a certain degree of flexible co-operation. Indeed, line and space may come so to dominate, that color in many of its other attractive aspects is freely sacrificed. The presence of space on a canvas has given rise to the conventional division of it into a background, a middle ground, and a foreground.

It is not necessary to pursue this line of inquiry to any greater length. I have already, in the two preceding divisions, said enough on the reciprocal relations of the diverse elements in painting. Any one of them is as apt to be master as servant. The principles I have attempted to emphasize are three. First a large variety of elements with laws of a purely mechanical character abound in painting, here in conflict, there in harmony. Secondly, conventions

<sup>22</sup>D. W. Ross, *Drawing and Painting*, pp. 162-170.

are used in painting in an unlimited degree, although some have been modified, discarded, or superseded by others, apparently, as inevitable. And, thirdly, that painting demands not only knowledge and skill in the manipulation of such varied material and conventions, but insight into their spirit and their still unfathomed possibilities for development.

But, in my emphasis upon these objective principles, what scope do I allow to the subjective principles so aggressively championed in the usual art-theory as the only determining ones? To begin with, an artist must first of all be trained in the use of his material and in the achievements of his art. When his skill and taste are thus perfected, he may exercise a choice within the established limits of that art or as he, more wisely, may extend these limits. His choice may be influenced by one subjective factor or another; for example, he may merely desire to surpass the old masters along their own specific lines, or, by giving a wider scope to factors neglected in the past, he may attempt, in an actual *pictorial* result, to extend the field of painting so as to incorporate within it a permanent source of some new *pictorial* beauty. Even an artist, of course, may seek to invent something other than a picture; but until he succeeds in producing something better than the past, the average lover of the art will conclude that what we have in this rich heritage is all that can be given along lines that we sacredly cherish. We would thus come to consider the new invention, not as an invention *in painting*, but as an invention of something wholly new, something, perchance, that is entertaining, useful,



or freakish, but, still something that is other than painting. For in the last analysis the individual with all his initiative is but a *means* in the production of a pictorial result with its own special qualities of supreme interest and with its own manner and laws of production. To give a larger prominence to the psychological individual than to the pictorial result is to substitute psychology or biography *in art* for art itself,—the most curious and persistent perversion of our age.

## IV

In the first division of this chapter, as well as in other parts of the book, I set forth the claim that critics disrupt the facts of art whenever they displace the material elements by psychological, technical, or abstract principles. There remains but one matter for present discussion: to what extent do the technical and psychological principles constitute an intrinsic part in the *substance* and in the *criticism* of painting?

That the material elements possess a psychophysical foundation by virtue of which their value is enhanced, has been sufficiently developed, so far as painting is concerned, in my discussion of the Experimental Method in Chapter IV and, also, in the second division of this chapter. We found that a material element varies in value, not only through its relation to other material elements, but also through its relation to human desire, affection, association, and a physiological organism. As a general thing, such effects fuse with, or better, are absorbed by the material element; nor is it easy to abstract them from the

material in its concrete expression. To have done so, and to have presented the psychological element as the only element of value, indicates the error of subjectivism from the standpoint of art's substance. As music offers the best example for the study of the psychological principle in its substantive aspect, I shall defer the further discussion of it until we come to that chapter. Thus delimited, our present problem assumes the following form: How do the psychological and technical principles operate in criticism?

Merit *within* an art is the problem, not merit *between* the arts or between art and some other forms of reality. By confounding the former with the latter distinction, philosophers have conceived the monstrosity of a hierarchy among the arts. In its more subtle forms, the confusion gave rise, both with the critic and the philosopher, to the description of art in terms of feeling, life, nature, beauty, perfection, etc. Thus they confound the subject of *merit within an art* with its *substantive* nature. How then within an art are we to decide between inferior and superior production?

In Chapter II, I insisted upon a distinction between the viewpoint of art and that of science. Art, we said, for its proper apprehension demands direct perception, whereas science, for the apprehension of a given phenomenon, refers to its originating condition. Here is a distinction of which we must not lose sight; namely, that the psychophysical individual yields the ultimate test in the determination of merit in art. But so much granted, it is of importance also to keep in mind that the psychophysical individual is a com-

plex creature, *capable of growth or stultification*; and that art in its material aspect is a result of mechanical, conventional, and historical conditions. Taste or individual appreciation, then, is subject to control, from within, by the laws of psychology, and from without, by the laws governing mechanical phenomena. Hence we cannot demand from painting what, under its general conditions, it is incapable of producing; nor should we be ready to accept in painting what, under the conditions, could have been done more effectively. Yet the ultimate factor in all such reference is the pictorial result,—the product of conditions, mechanical and psychological. Hence a reference to these conditions is justified only to the extent to which they clarify the pictorial result. In its own peculiar qualities, however, the pictorial result eludes cognition if considered merely in reference to its conditions, just as pleasure or pain as such elude cognition if referred only to their physiological correlates. We perceive pictorial qualities either directly or not at all. As a result, although the reference in art to the conditioning principles is vital for the full and proper judgment of its merit, the deciding quality and *raison d'être* for painting is thus given not in its indirect, but only in its direct apprehension.

Furthermore, direct apprehension is susceptible of growth and stultification. Hence, although painting embodies certain pictorial elements that may upon their mere appearance engage our interest and stimulate our admiration, this criterion, by itself, is not sufficient; first, for the reason that painting is a highly complex and specialized form of phenomenon; secondly,

that perception is under the control of preperception; and, thirdly, that a finished product is always relative to its engendering conditions. If, therefore, we do not know the limitations and the possibilities of these three groups of facts, we are in no position to pass a rational judgment upon any specific work of art.

I have already indicated what we enjoy in painting. To be sure, painting does not exist with a pre-ordained measure and boundary. How then shall we arbitrate in respect to its proper boundary? Apart from the actual facts of history I do not know how this question is to be answered. History, of course, is not final in the number of possibilities which painting may develop; but until better things are produced than history already offers, history may be said to contain the best standards of procedure.

But what history thus offers is not perceived without training. Not only are the technical and conventional means, for the untutored, usually concealed, but even the pictorial elements which, if perceived at all, must be perceived directly, resist observation, where so-called taste has not been trained. The common error consists in viewing taste or direct appreciation as some simple principle, whereas modern psychology never wearies of repeating that direct appreciation is a complex process involving many factors, outward and inward, and, through their reciprocal influence, making possible growth or stultification. The anarchist in art overlooks the fact that man is not less natural because he possesses sound culture, but that he is the more natural because of his culture, since culture represents organized con-

trol of reality. So it is with perception; a man exercises the most correct perception not in its undeveloped, but only in its most developed form. Here is the root of the whole fallacy underlying the subjective standard of art. Its element of truth consists in the fact that it insists upon direct perception. It thus puts the elements of art upon the same plane of sensuous existence as pleasure, pain, sweetness, whiteness, etc., and to this extent the position is beyond cavil. But it fails to note that direct perception is not the less direct because educated. In fact, it becomes fully and properly direct only by virtue of its education. No one can dispute that it is solely because of his training that a psychologist acquires his ascendancy in the observation of subjective phenomena; and it is solely by virtue of his specialized field and training that an artist learns to perceive and discriminate as only a man trained as an artist can perceive and discriminate. Hence the familiar expression that an artist uses his eyes where the average man remains blind. It is not true, however, as the common saying would have it, that his vision has merely been purified. The more accurate truth is, that his vision has been highly developed and organized. Had he been trained to use his eyes as diligently upon other phenomena as upon the one in which he is engaged, he would have found that trained perception is always relative to and dependent upon the recognition of the facts within that sphere. If, then, the psychologist is blind where the artist has sight, it is also true that the artist is blind where the psychologist has sight; and so on *ad infinitum*.

The error of the historic school of critics lies in their failure to place proper stress upon direct apprehension. Like the scientists, they would rather refer us to the antecedents of a phenomenon for the last and final judgment of a work of art; whereas the *past* should be used merely as a means for increased *present* perception. The two, when rightly interpreted, are thoroughly interdependent; for if it is true that a taste untransformed by past tradition is blind and barbaric, it is equally true that a tradition, when left unvitalized in the present, is cold and empty. A critic cannot evade the responsibility of an individual judgment; a narrow training of his perception in his art is all he may evade.

I combat three views in my conception of art; a lawless art, a subjectivistic art, and an art exclusively couched in some empty, abstract designation, as life, beauty, perfection, etc. In their place, I would substitute art in the concrete which, in virtue of its own specific qualities, limitations, and possibilities, affects and is affected by an individual. The development of art, therefore, depends upon the development of an individual; but the development of an individual in this field also depends upon the development of art; and in art naturally the more ultimate of the two facts is art. Yet obvious as this conclusion may appear, the tendency has been to exalt the individual in this sphere at the expense of art with its own unique elements of enjoyment and its own peculiar laws in their production and perception.

## CHAPTER VII

### Poetry

#### I

The elements in a work of art fall into four groups: the material, conventional, technical, and psychological. If any one of them enjoys a primacy, it is not the psychological, as so commonly intimated, but the material principle, for it is this principle that above all others determines the plurality of the arts, gives occasion for the expression of affection and conation, and supplies the factors most basic, not only in art-structure, but in the varied and specific structure which affection and conation assume in each of the arts. With painting and music, the material principle furnishes even the elements of dominating interest. Since the art of poetry *seems* the most striking exception to this primacy, and since I have already exemplified my theory in sufficient detail with painting, I shall, without an attempt at a formal duplication, consider poetry in the light of this deceptive contradiction. Such an approach to the subject, moreover, will aid in the attempt to place in their proper perspective, certain obvious facts only too frequently distorted by the literary critic.

But while I maintain the primacy, I most emphatically deny the exclusive dominance in art-theory of any *one* of the four principles. I adhere, then, to the primacy of matter; yet I also insist that art is a recip-

rocal product of the four. But, *within these conditions*, the relative prominence of the four principles in the different arts may vary. Thus in music, for example, the material factor has at least as much scope as it has in painting, although the psychological factor has less; whereas, in painting, the material principle has more scope, but the psychological less than it has in poetry. Moreover, each of the four principles is itself plural; hence, when we inspect the arts from this standpoint, variations of the kind mentioned will indefinitely multiply. It is a hazardous procedure, therefore, to write of a particular art in terms of a general formula, unless we also clearly recognize what in its composition is rigid and what is flexible. This situation demands that we state the general formula with its inflexible requirement so as to meet the specific material of each of the arts. I shall, therefore, define poetry as a matter of verbal meaning, arranged and affected rhythmically and conventionally. By *meaning*, as here denoted, I do not imply a purely *mental* process, but the incorporation by it of that vast range of matter to which poetry applies, extending from heaven to earth, from nature to man, from city to country, from fact to fiction, and, from science, to art, history, religion, and mythology. In this vast scope of matter, no restrictions are placed upon poetry, except such as may emanate from its own prescribed conventional and technical structure. In its *verbal* aspect, also, poetry includes an extensive range of material, although the range allowed or encouraged has its similarly prescribed limits and conditions. The significance attached to the *union*



of the terms, "verbal meaning," will be indicated as we proceed. At this stage, it is sufficient to say that the conception is vital, and that I have shaped the phrase with an eye for accuracy rather than for effect.

## II

One passes with a sense of relief from theorists in the fields of painting and music to those in the field of poetry. It is not that the former are less astute, but that the latter are more directly cognizant of their concrete art. Poetry is content to shine in its own beauty; painting and music endlessly affect a beauty other than their own. Nor is the reason for this difference a matter of subtilty. Language as an instrument of communication is a thing of daily use, and poetry, although much else, is also language brought to splendid expression. Hence, not even for the average man are its merits all concealed. But in regard to color and tone, and the two arts reared upon them, the situation is obviously different. We are not, for the most part, as with language, trained from infancy into a direct perception of their peculiar charm and use; and the few that are, have been warped in natural appreciation by a tradition hostile to the pleasures of the senses. In such a situation, fancy takes the place of fact, and "nothing is, but what is not."

Literary critics beyond all others have been favored in the possession of Aristotle's *Poetics*; for, from the standpoint of his method, if not always from the standpoint of his results, Aristotle is indisputably

the one supremely sane man who has written on the subject of art. In regard to the drama, minor omissions or statements apart, he has put literary criticism upon a relatively sound basis. For him, action under the control of certain conventions born of morality, reason, and the stage, is the substance of the drama. I am not here, of course, concerned as to whether the conventions which he enumerated are exhaustive or correct; that, for the present purpose, is a minor matter. The important thing is that *action*, rather than *verbal meaning*, is for him the substance of the drama,—action, as reflective of the conditions of the stage rather than those of a book; and further, as reflective of such additional conventions as may originate in general prejudices, morality, or reason. Hence with him, not merely action, as we more usually refer to this term in its abstraction, but *organized action* is the substance of the drama. And, to my mind, in these particulars, apart from his admirable method, lies Aristotle's great merit in his exposition of the drama.

But the drama, unfortunately, does not exhaust the whole field of poetry; for it is as natural for the drama to exist outside of this sphere as to exist within it. What, then, more narrowly constitutes the defined sphere of poetry? Here Aristotle's guidance fails.

It is true that Aristotle inclines to identify poetry with the element of *creation*; and he also affirms that poetry is not to be confounded with *metrics*; for, as he writes, "the work of Herodotus might be put into verse, but it would still be a species of history with

metre no less than without it." He then goes on to say that poetry "is more philosophical and a higher thing than history; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular." This passage, to be sure, is something of an enigma; but if it is read in the light of his whole system of thought, it seems to mean that reality in its organized form stands higher in rank than reality in a form less fully organized. Thus we find three elements touched upon, creation, organization, and metrics. But as to what that *substance* of poetry may be that is thus to be created and organized, he says nothing beyond the negative qualification that versification is not one of its special elements. Hence, however admirable his treatment of the drama may seem, Aristotle's exposition of poetry in its more circumscribed meaning contains nothing of special value. As a result, critics have attempted, unaided by Aristotle, to accomplish for poetry something that might equal his analysis of the drama. Have they succeeded?

Following the lead of Aristotle, critics are fairly unanimous in regarding the drama, the epic, and the lyric as the three main divisions of poetry, although the drama, as generally conceded, may assume a form somewhat independent of the general requirements of poetry; whereas the lyric and epic are supposedly alike in this conformity. Are these meanings and requirements of poetry susceptible of formulation? In answering this question, we must, first of all, guard against several possible errors. It is an error to assume that a thing is, of necessity, of a definite nature because assigned a specific name; and it is

also an error to assume that the *significant* quality of a thing is, of necessity, also *differentiating*, or *vice versa*.

Aristotle is the classical illustration of the first error. "Tragedy," he writes, "advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes it found its natural form, and there it stopped." In this description, the issue hinges upon the word "natural." What do we mean by the term? If we imply that a tragedy had a prefixed constitution, we fall into the first error noted; on the other hand, if we imply thereby merely that tragedy, "having passed through many changes," achieved a "workable" form (as conditioned by history in the evolution of a given material operating under certain specific human aims or needs), the form, notwithstanding, would be natural, but it would not be prefixed, except, possibly, in some of the conditions out of which it historically evolved. It is evident, therefore, that controversy over the proper form of the drama will never cease; for arbitrary factors will inevitably inhere, whatever the definition that we may choose to frame. I have enlarged upon this matter in its more general aspects in Chapter III.

The error that results when we confound a *significant* with a *distinguishing* trait, has also, in its general aspects, been expanded upon in another part of this book; but a single illustration may suffice to bring this truth to mind. Thus color, as already noted, is basic to painting; but color, in a given painting, may not be the object of most significant interest; the primary interest, instead, may center in the portrayal of light or space; or, if not in these, it may

consist in the specific portrayal of any other of its many constituent interests. Hence, while color is both basic and differentiating, it may or it may not be the really significant element of interest in a given painting. Notwithstanding, painting became a specific thing in virtue of these various qualities variously combined by the most eminent of its exponents.

It is gratifying, therefore, to find in the following statement from W. A. Neilson's *Essentials to Poetry* a clear recognition of at least one of these possible dangers or pitfalls. "A final definition of poetry," he writes, "is not to be expected now or at any future time. For poetry is not simple, but a compound of various elements; and the relative importance of these elements, even the leadership among them, varies \* \* \*." So far I agree. He then goes on to say, "that there has long been a recognition of the existence in poetry of the three fundamental elements of imagination, reason and the sense of fact. Other factors, of course, enter into the production of poetical effects \* \* \*, but there is ground for regarding these three, as, in some sense, essential. The *absence* of anyone of them is fatal in a way which cannot be maintained of those subsidiary factors. The *presence* of all three, balanced and co-operating, will be found to characterize those works which a consensus of opinion places in the first rank. The *excess* of any one indicates the presence of a tendency which may not be destructive, but which, while conferring qualities which for a time bring popularity, ultimately stamps the works in which it appears as, in some essential respect, inferior."

The above extract presents a method of procedure so nearly correct that I am almost disposed not to criticize it. Moreover, we are so constantly assailed with the emotional side of poetry that I feel a secret delight in its omission among his "three fundamental elements." But since Neilson neglects to incorporate with his "fundamentals," elements only too constantly ignored, I persist in my task.

Words, conventionalized by meter and other requirements into organized form, constitute an element of poetry at once distinguishing and fundamental. As with color in paintings, words in their several aspects and functions are the very texture out of which a poem is wrought, and hence, like color, may be fundamental to poetry in a *two-fold* sense. We may ask in passing why the substantive character of words is so commonly ignored. The fact that words may be put to bad use is added proof of their substantive reality; and what shall we say of their substantive reality in the positive pleasure they give when they are put to their many admirable uses? To bring language to its highest power of felicitous and splendid expression represents as great a merit as thus to bring color, in painting, or in music, thus to bring tone; and our pleasure in the beauties of verbal expression is just as direct. I shall enlarge upon this matter at great length in its due place.

Neilson's enumeration of the "fundamental elements" excludes many conventions, metrical and logical, which, when reflected in *verbal meaning*, impart to poetry the very essence of its flavor and substance; for *meaning*, as it appears in poetry, is so

closely wedded with its special verbal, metrical, and logical structure, that the affirmed distinction between poetry and science, or between poetry and prose, has become a commonplace. But these elements, it may be said, are trivial in the face of such august qualities as imagination and reason. Perhaps they are; yet, banish the peculiarly verbal, logical, and metrical structure of meaning as it appears in poetry, and imagination and reason would have to seek other fields, or a pure vacuum, for their lofty operation. Accurately conceived, Neilson's three fundamentals—imagination, reason, and the sense of fact—are at best but psychological abstractions, since they remain incapable of a specific definition, as applicable to poetry, until we widen our list of fundamentals so as to include *all* the elements *constituent* of poetry. For, without this special stuff or material, what is to distinguish the operation of these faculties in poetry from their equally extensive operation in many other spheres of human activity? While, therefore, I agree with Neilson in certain respects, in others I seriously and most radically disagree.

Stedman's book on the same subject recognizes explicitly a more comprehensive enumeration of the elements. Since, in formulating a theory, we must not imply unwittingly or embody incoherently what we wish to embrace in the subject, but must state it explicitly and in a unified manner, Stedman's definition is more valuable than Neilson's. Stedman writes: "poetry is rhythmical, imaginative language, expressing the invention, taste, thought, passion, and insight of the human soul."

In this list of elements, language and the metrical art are definitely recognized, although, as here expressed, they are the servant, never the master. Stedman, thus, is guilty of the same sort of error that we encountered in the study of painting, where representation, erroneously, is made *the* end, and color, lines, light, etc., *the* means; hence the same correction applies to each case: elements may alter their rank of master and servant. Moreover, such terms as "invention, taste, thought, passion, and insight of the human soul," savor too much here, as in common usage, of what may be termed abstractions. Furthermore, the list is too restricted; for the elements of interest in poetry are not confined to interest in the "human soul," but extend from Heaven to many things of earth other than the human soul. On the other hand, it would seem to demand but a little change in phraseology to convert his "rhythmical, imaginative language" into the more accurate phrase "verbal meaning arranged and affected rhythmically and conventionally." But, as we shall see in a moment, the little more or the little less, and what worlds away!

The subordination of words to meaning or content approaches its more *radical* statement in the wide assertion that poetry has for *its* aim (not for *an* aim) "the communication of emotion by means of verbal images." Many writers content themselves with the mere assertion of the claim. Others, like C. T. Winchester, in *Some Principles of Literary Criticism*, or Tolstoi, in *What is Art*, make elaborate attempts



at a more systematic definition; but a pound of folly has as little worth as an ounce of it.<sup>1</sup>

This group should be extended to include the writers who, like Matthew Arnold or Woodberry, define poetry exclusively in terms of such abstractions as life or experience. The fault with both groups—and their exponents are legion—lies in the fact that they identify poetry either with a single fragment or element of its fourfold substance, or with some abstraction, instead of presenting it in that totality of elements whereby poetry differs from sleeping, eating, prose, or still other forms of “life.” For if poetry is a form of “life,” so too are these other things; and if we say nothing illuminating or distinctive of eating when defining it by the inclusive term “life,” so we say nothing illuminating or distinctive of poetry when we thus alone define it. Poetry is to be distinguished from these other things, and identified as such, only to the extent to which it, like the others, embodies a distinct group of qualities. In a word, they are to be defined only in terms of concrete elements and not in terms of some common abstraction. As a result of the vicious tendency noted, theorists are constantly put to the necessity of defining poetry, not by a reference to its own complex nature and structure, but by a less pertinent reference to an equally inadequate conception of prose, science, or the other arts. Moreover, they seem entirely to overlook the facts, that a quality is rarely if ever monopolized by any special group of objects, and that the

<sup>1</sup> I exposed the hopeless errors of this position in my criticism of *The Emotion Theory*, pp. 57, 59-61.

simplest object, when closely inspected, is well-nigh inexhaustible in the complexity of its qualities: ignorance, like distance, creates the illusion of simplicity. And it is because of this induced simplicity in a complicated subject, I presume, that the bewildered layman finds himself instinctively rubbing his eyes when reading the usual art-theory. He, unfortunately, is not so constituted as to perceive at once just how far a theorist wanders from his concrete art, although he does know with certainty that the mere blur presented is not a picture of poetry. But once suggest to him the necessary corrections, and even a "blur" may assume a sane perspective.

### III

The elements of poetry, in their intricate, elusive, and far-reaching character, are not so easily understood, as are those of the more sensuous art of painting, by sticking to the mere surface of words, or, even worse, by moulding our thought upon the terms of an outworn psychology. Thus, while mastered and blinded by words in the ordinary method of reasoning *about* poetry, we must not, while thus overborne, at the same time deny their full potency *in* poetry. The formula that poetry is verbal meaning, arranged and affected rhythmically and conventionally, has, therefore, a methodological as well as a truly synthetic basis. If this formula is all that it pretends to be, it would have to be a genuine synthesis, and not a loose and incoherent aggregation of conflicting statements and phrases. Secondly, it would have

to yield a description of poetry that is peculiar to it, and not one that will as readily apply to a myriad of other things. And, thirdly, it would have to include a clear recognition of all the elements to which poetry has fallen heir in its actual and varied historical development. To present this formula in the full quantity of its fruit, is not possible, of course, in a brief chapter; but, within this limitation, I stand ready to assume the full responsibility of the formula as thus outlined.

We are constantly informed that poetry differs from science in the fact that the former is more concrete and the latter more abstract. This view, reiterated to satiety, is reflected in the following formula: "Poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language." Which of these elements are we supposed to consider concrete, "the mind" or "the verbal expression?" Language, of course, *may* be abstract or concrete; but the formula, as well as the usual statement of the fact, more explicitly denotes the other alternative; and the adoption of this alternative, among other ideas, is forced upon theorists because they conceive of words as symbolic, and because they assume words, meanings, and things to be wholly unrelated and disparate. Hence my difficulty: What are we to understand by the assertion that mind, meaning, or truth (the terms commonly employed) are more concrete in poetry than in science? In the first place, neither I, nor any one else, can be at all convinced as to the precise import we are to attach to such terms as mind, meaning, or truth; and, when I accept

the usual statement of them, a concrete mind or a concrete truth may signify a contradiction as obvious as a mental stone or a round square. There is no doubt that mind or, to use the more precise term, *meaning*, is closely bound up, not only with its verbal expression, but with a thousand and one concrete things out of which, in one aspect of its existence, it is composed. It is also important, not merely vaguely to intimate, but clearly to ascertain, the exact range of this *dependence*; and it would further be necessary accurately to determine the extent to which words, meanings, and things are *independent*, and, perchance, even incompatible. Since general usage is either dark or misleading on these points, the investigation of them shall constitute the first and most important step in the exposition of my own formula.

Miss Puffer in a chapter on *The Beauty of Literature* expresses the current view on the relation of words and meaning. She writes: "The word is nothing in itself; it is not sound primarily, but thought. The word is but a sign, a negligible quantity in human intercourse. \* \* \* Words are first of all meanings, and meanings are to be understood and lived through. We can hardly even speak of the meaning of a word, but rather of what it is, directly, in the mental state that is called up by it. \* \* \* Therefore, since literature is the art of words, it is the stream of thought itself that we must consider as the material of literature. In short, literature is the dialect of life."<sup>2</sup> Words, she tells us, are nothing; they are not a matter of sound, not even a matter of *meaning*;

<sup>2</sup>E. D. Puffer, *The Psychology of Beauty*, pp. 207-208.

hence, in their conjunction, *meaning* is everything; and "meanings are to be understood and lived through." But what are *meanings* which, as she affirms, "are to be understood and lived through?" By the phrase, "to be understood," she no doubt succeeds in vaguely intimating that meanings are dependent upon consciousness, and this interpretation is substantiated by the assertion that they must be "lived through." Since, however, all that I "live through," as, for example, sleeping or breathing, is not *meaning*, and, since many of the things similarly "lived through" do not demand the exercise of consciousness, I am driven back from the latter to the vague intimation of her former phrase, namely, that meaning is dependent upon consciousness; but I hasten to add that "pain," also, is completely dependent upon consciousness, although it is rather of the nature of a *thing* than a *meaning*. Yet she would make this exceedingly vague conception of meaning, to the total exclusion of words, the sole "material of literature." No wonder that poetry, with such hazy advocates, is, in the eyes of many, a mere "gossamer web of moonshine."

First of all, then, let us define the term *meaning*. After that, I will also indicate the proper conception of words and of things. And such an examination is vital, since the "material of literature," particularly when in the form of poetry, consists of these three elements in their intricate, multiple, and subtle relationship. Once such points are established, and the reach of them to the historical aspects of poetry is indicated, my restricted aim in the discussion will be

compassed; for my purpose in the discussion of poetry is not to furnish a house, but rather, as a Cinderellian drudge, to rid its theory of cobwebs and some of its blinding dust.

What does the term *meaning* signify? An ultimate fact of experience is not easily definable. Hence we must, in this aspect of the term, speak of it by the aid of synonyms. A word or a thing is said to have meaning when it has significance or import. Sometimes, in scientific circles, it is also defined as "a plan of action."

The above attempt to describe meaning may be easily confounded with another series of problems, such problems, for example, as the following: can thought be carried on apart from language; or can an idea exist apart from imagery; or does an idea resolve itself into its motor correlatives? In all such discussion, theorists usually intimate the *existence*, but they do not define the *nature* of meaning; and, when they attempt this description, they invariably commit a fallacy analogous to the chemist's usual definition of water in terms of hydrogen and oxygen. In each case they overlook the fact, already enlarged upon at some length in Chapter II, that both *meaning* and *water* are ultimates in their respective possession of a nature and function that are absolutely unique. Hence, as in the case of water, we do not explain the *nature* of meaning by its resolution into something other than meaning; and that meaning actually exists and functions, is no more a matter of profitable controversy than that water exists and functions. Yet, when we would define its *nature*, such terms as import,

significance, or "plan of action," present the only clarification of it that can be offered.

We may now ask how meaning, as such, originates. Here our explanation is fuller. Meaning is the product of a consciousness on the one hand, and of a relation among things on the other. Meaning, therefore, denotes a twofold relation; a dependence upon consciousness and a dependence upon things. It is clearly dual in nature; it is psychic; and yet, as "import," it denotes something other than itself. In the former aspect, it is ultimate and incommunicable; in the latter, it is definable as a "plan of action." As a "plan of action," meaning denotes a somewhat diversified origin; it may originate in the relations of practical life, or in such relations as are recognized to exist between things and things or between things and man; in a word, it may originate in any causal or static relation. Furthermore, meaning has a foundation also in the direct apprehension of things and in the inter-relationship of words. To be exhaustive, we may at this point revert to the affirmed connection of meaning with language, images, and the motor system. In fact, add thereto its foundation in consciousness, and its full nature is again restored. A duality, then, haunts meaning like a shadow its object; and, unless we are cautious, we are more than prone to surrender the reality and to hug the shadow. For, in virtue of its duality and in virtue of its large and varied foundation in elements other than mental, meaning tends to set itself adrift from the purely psychic sphere and to attach itself, instead, to things or words. But words, as Miss Puffer stated, suggest

rather than embody meaning; and "things" are said to resent this intrusion even more vigorously than words. Hence, what more natural than that meaning, so inhospitably treated by things, words, and consciousness, should be set completely free, and, according to a popular and arbitrary change of sentiment, attach itself now here, now there, now nowhere, like an exile without a home? Sometimes, to be sure, it is housed, as with Miss Puffer, in so spacious a place as "life;" then again, it is confined to an abode so vague and contracted as to be conceived of only by a deluded theorist.

To sunder things that are fundamentally incompatible is a merit in the orderly development of thought; but to sunder things that, in spite of incompatibility, are fundamentally wedded, is to fly in the face of a thousand evils. Yet the curious fact remains that, when the two aspects in meaning are severed, the incommunicable part is the one which the generality of writers stands by; whereas that part of meaning which alone has what we term "import," and hence, is communicable, is the part that they relinquish. The former aspect is strictly mental; it is ultimate, but it is also untranslatable. In so far as meaning, however, takes on "import," it is definable as "a plan of action;" and in this aspect of its reality, it partakes of what is objective rather than subjective. Hence, in its actual existence, it is expressed, not so much "by the means of," as "in the nature of" *words* and *things* in their many special qualities and relations. When, therefore, we say that poetry is the concrete expression of the mind, unless we also



hold that poetry performs miracles, we certainly cannot say that it is expressing the mind in that aspect of it which, by its very nature, is ultimate and incommunicable. Rather, then, should we say of poetry that it is the expression of words and things, objective and subjective, since meaning, in its communicable aspect, is not otherwise attainable or expressible except as things and as words in their diversified relationship.

It is true that without mind or consciousness there could be no such thing as meaning; but neither could meaning as "import" come into existence if things and words existed without distinctive qualities and relations. This truth is almost as old as philosophy: "nothing in the mind that does not come from the senses;" or, "a concept without a percept is empty." Hence, much as we may proclaim poetry as "the expression of the *mind*," the mind must get material from without before it can give from within,<sup>3</sup>

Meaning, then, is moulded on the shape, form, constitution, and relation of things, whether subjective or objective. The first removal from this dependence, when general but not complete, constitutes the realm of fancy or fiction; but the complete removal marks the realm of insanity. Such removal, whether sane or insane, originates in the fact that things, because fluctuating and complex, are not easily definable, and it also originates in the fact that the mind may rely upon a mental transcription with

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<sup>3</sup> I merely enforce and demand a rigorous interpretation of the triadic conception of the psychic unit, without which we remain the victim of idle abstractions.

the same and, often, with more facility and accuracy of operation than obtains in its direct apprehension of objects, particularly so, since we in a large part of our experience are primarily concerned with the *relations* between things rather than with detached *things* as such. But, whatever the advantage in the general use of a mental transcript, the mental transcript always points to *things* in relation, subjective or objective; and these things, when in the organized form of the different sciences, are called reality. Such transcriptions, however, especially when complex and fluctuating, are held in the mind with some difficulty. It is here that words leap to our aid, although their function is rarely restricted to this use. They may, in fact, expand their functions to such an extent that they may come to displace, not only mental transcriptions but even concrete things. Let us, then, for a moment, abandon our investigation of *meaning* and consider the nature of words and things.

When is a word truly such? Is a word in Sanscrit, which I cannot read, a word for me? Of course, I can perceive certain marks; but is a mark, when so totally devoid of import, even a symbol? An "empty symbol" is clearly a contradiction in terms. In fact, divest a mere mark of all meaning, and we would not even have a mark. Here I merely state what every psychologist emphatically affirms: that every sensation for its distinct existence involves a complex mental process and a super-induction of meaning. A word, then, denotes something more than the contradictory "empty symbol." Meaning is essential

to it. But since meaning in the sense of "import" itself denotes a reference to things and words, we find ourselves in a circle, from which our only present exit leads to an examination of the relation between words and things. Hence I shall ask: Is a word a fully-fledged "thing?" If it is not, in what way do they differ; if it is, in what way do they agree?

It is commonly assumed that a word differs from a thing in three respects; first, that a word is an embodied meaning, whereas a thing is a body without meaning; or, secondly, if we grant that both have meaning, that we *arbitrarily import* meaning into a word, whereas a thing, out of its own nature, *forces its meaning* upon us; thirdly, that a "thing" is a matter of substance and fibre, whereas a word is an anæmic fibreless something, or, rather, a mere "nothing," in Miss Puffer's description. I shall make no special effort to keep these three aspects of the question apart, although I shall enter upon each in detail. The outcome of the discussion will tend to show that their similarity far outweighs their differences; and that words, things, and meaning, when accurately conceived, denote distinguishable aspects or limits of a complex human experience, but not separate, unrelated, and wholly independent "things." So much, in advance, may be stated by way of suggestion; but, now, for the proof!

Words may be considered as detached objects, in the manner that orthography presents them. Yet does such treatment tend toward the fullest and most proper understanding of them? Strictly speaking, of course, nothing in this world can be grasped, and

philosophers say that nothing can even exist, in total detachment from all other things. But, aside from these considerations, we may say that orthography presents words with the same contracted and devitalized reality that the individualist reflects, such as Rousseau, who studies man artificially abstracted from society. But this mode of abstract separation is fraught with untold errors, especially when unmindful of the fact that the peculiar significance that things acquire is the product of the relations that they sustain to each other. Thus a word is, fundamentally, an element of speech and of thought in their varied and complex relation to many other human and physical conditions. Of these various relations, I shall begin with the simplest; yet, however simple, it will prove the entering wedge for a radical revision of the popular view of words and things.

A word in its relation to speech, is not only a thing with a specific *form*, as orthography instills, but it is also the incarnation of a *function* that is relatively fixed. As the grammarian considers them, words are "parts of speech," and, as "parts of speech," they initiate within words a whole new sphere of reciprocal relations and modifications; and this whole sphere of word-interdependence, which the grammarian attempts to formulate into laws, is founded in the nature of words as *elements of speech* and in the nature of man as committed to the purpose of speech and as bound up with the conditions and limitations that the peculiar structure of his own nature enforces. Even the desire or purpose of speech admits of little choice. Caught up here by

a variety of social instincts and needs as by the rules and regulations within words, individual control approaches a vanishing point. These word-created injunctions may, in fact, become so binding that we, from the standpoint of the grammarian, had better violate the moral than the grammatical code; for, in his heart of hearts, he is more apt to condone the former than the latter kind of delinquency. Human dependence upon word-relations, instincts, and the other conditions of speech, may, however, come to engender a specific *desire* in their use and mastery; a use and mastery that, at first, is both instinctive and enforced within the ordinary circles of human intercourse; but, gradually gaining in vigor and in self-awareness, the desire may at length come to blossom, in some, as the ruling passion of life; in all others but a hypothetical few, as a constant emulation ever to surpass our yesterdays in the use of words or to surpass individuals with whom we have daily or literary intercourse. Thus words, when once related through speech to an active human desire, assume a power and beauty so overshadowing, that the gifted pen of Shakespeare, in the general estimation of man, overtops all the other gifted forms of human achievement.

Or, again: consider words from the standpoint of their vocal expression! What in the course of their history determines their vocal character; or what from the standpoint of the metrical art decides their use in a line of good verse? Has this matter also a foundation in the nature of the things embraced, or is all this vast modification of form and use arbitrary

and fortuitous? Musical qualities, or their opposite, are inevitable to the spoken word. By utilizing this element in its many delicate forms of adjustment and elaboration, poetry has not only acquired conventions that are unique to it, but a power for expression that reaches even to the involuntary and physiological side of man.

But words may even assume personal relations with men. They may, in the first place, come to suggest and embody such psychic attributes as love, disgust, delicacy, power, refinement, elation. Or, as is so general, words may even take the place of things and meanings that, to all purposes, for us, are non-existent. Thus we may, quite unwittingly, come to fight for them, die for them, or forever blind ourselves by means of them. Words more truly dominate man than man can be said to dominate them; but, while we suffer from their abuse, we glory in their power.

All such arguments, and they may be easily multiplied or extended, establish the fact that words are "things," since words to all purposes behave and act as "things" do. But are there no differences between words and things? The facts just stated, of course, intimate no difference at all in this particular. Let us assume, then, that the meaning of a word, within limits, may be arbitrarily imposed. However, we no sooner grant the supposition, but we become aware that new restrictions are concomitantly imposed upon us; for, once launch a word with an initial meaning, I care not how deliberate or unconscious the process in its formation, and its fate or destiny

is no longer in our keeping. We cannot, at pleasure, alter or withdraw a meaning once acquired by a word without a defeat of speech. And, unless a man, thus minded, loudly proclaimed his intention to the rest of the world, and, for every change, secured its suffrage, he would be literally bound hand and foot by such meaning as the word may have assumed in the long course of general usage. Even in general usage the change in the meaning of a word is usually restricted to what may be termed a broadening, a deepening, or a narrowing process: a radical facing-about of meanings is the rare exception when not deliberate or loudly proclaimed.

Words, then, have a multiple foundation for their interest and reality; they are helpful to memory, indispensable to mental activity and to social discourse, and either typical of, or vital to, the acquisition and preservation of knowledge. In addition, they have become a relatively independent source of human interest and achievement. They are typical of knowledge to the extent in which a mere name or word, as with a child and an uncritical adult, terminates a quest for knowledge; and they are vital to the acquisition of knowledge in its larger meaning, in so far as a word may embody a mental transcription of things and relations, subjective and objective,—things and relations, only too frequently, incapable either of a direct or of an ever-present experience. Hence *verbal meaning* may often more accurately denote the determination of a thing than the actual, fluctuating, tangible existence in space and time. The fleeting, changing existence in the momentary

appearance of a thing never presents the full and total reality of even the simplest object; and *verbal meanings*, here, represent our sole refuge. This conclusion now demands a more minute examination of "things."

Take a stone, a most commonplace phenomenon! Yet, think a moment. Is it really so commonplace? To a physicist, it is a fleeting mass of electrons; to the chemist, an equally fleeting mass of atoms; to the geologist, a page in the world's history; to the psychologist, a sensation-complex; to the boy, a thing he can throw; and thus we might continue to enumerate all the special meaning it bit by bit acquires. After that, we may attempt to contrast this growing fund of its significance with its initial and commonplace debut. But how, then, are we to speak of it? Shall I describe the stone as a matter of *verbal meaning*, or shall I describe it in terms of that physical, sermonless thing there before me? We know how the history of thought has answered this: "things are not always what they seem," or "the invisible in point of reality transcends the visible." I shall not, of course, enter upon the long controversy herein bound up. The conclusion on its very face is clear and unmistakable; namely, that what we perceive of a thing in a limited scope of its existing context, never can and never will exhaust the full richness of its reality. Truly, there is more to a stone than is contained in the average man's philosophy; but where shall we place, and how shall we define that "more?"

However, since it is impossible for the average man to wax eloquent on the subject of a stone, substitute for this illustration that of a flower! At once



you admit to the previous facts a whole new series. Here you still evoke science, but you will also enlist the whole range of human affections and conations, so that, although to a Peter Bell a yellow primrose is a yellow primrose, a spade a spade, neither more nor less than he can actually see, smell, or touch; and although to a botanist it unveils a story more wondrous than a fairy tale and a history even more startling in its mystery than the one told by the geologist; to a Wordsworth, with a heart and eye "that hath kept watch o'er man's mortality,"

"The meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

In the light of such illustrations, it is not difficult to see why names should embody, not only the contracted aspect of an object's momentary existence, but a meaning that extends far beyond. On the other hand, we also know—and now I come to my second point—that a name is quite as often *less* significant than an object. Moreover, our independent acquisition of words and our wide and daily contact with things, for us, nameless, serve to intensify this sense of disparity between words and things. Herein, then, we have the several conflicts that, in general custom, lead to their divorce. But beware the pitfalls that may follow! We must not make the isolated and detached things of fleeting existence our ultimate reference of truth, for that would be reversion. What we should do is to organize all this changing richness in its appearance into a more inclusive and comprehensive *idea*, since things do not exist in nature

with a prefixed measure and boundary; and, to think that objects do thus exist, represents a second form of reversion. Worse still, however, would be that third type of reversion which inclines to identify this organized and objectified form of meaning with that inarticulate, psychic entity which I described before. Meaning in its proper and inevitable development, then, attaches itself to words or to things; but things in turn, as we have shown, urge us back to meaning, and meaning carries us back, either to the inarticulate, psychic entity, or to words. In this circle of human experience, place "meaning" where you wish; only beware that you avoid an unwitting dogmatism, or a reversion to an erroneous form of thought; for, unless we are cautious in dealing with things that are at once so complex, subtle, and intricate as the relations of words, things, and meanings, we may exhibit ourselves as the most pathetic victims of words even while we label them as empty and soulless symbols.

Do *things* exist in any sense when divested of *meaning*? I have already indicated that a word cannot thus exist; but it now remains to show whether the same conclusion holds true of things. Take the simplest illustration—man! He *is* a son, brother, father, husband, banker, citizen, American, philanthropist, criminal, saint, etc. Now when a mother speaks of her son or a sister of her brother or a child of its father or a wife of her husband, does each speak of him in his entirety or only to the extent in which he is supposed to have in some superficial and restricted manner acquired the meaning of son, brother, etc? If

we claim to think of him in each reference only in a restricted and surface way, why do we jail the whole of the banker,—head, trunk, limbs, and soul—when he comes to acquire the designation or meaning of a criminal? Either our sense of justice and morality is absolutely at fault, or we must admit that each of these meanings penetrates from the center to the periphery of a man's being; and that each of the meanings assigned to him appears to do the same thing to the exclusion or with the inclusion of the other meanings of his being. Consider him apart from these meanings, and I defy you to produce even a name that would apply to him. In other words, the most ordinary apprehension of an object involves four factors, a mind, a body, an experience, and an object; and the object that results is not something with a prefixed measure and boundary, but a thing that of necessity varies in its nature, as with Peter Bell, Wordsworth, and the botanists, whenever one of the four factors varies. In short, a thing as it exists for man in all his actual or possible knowledge of it, is penetrated with meaning from its inception to the end of the longest and richest history that it may come to enjoy; and a thing without meaning, like a word without meaning, to all purposes, is an empty nothing; so empty, in fact, that we cannot, as we have said, even assign it a name. For when we do assign it a name, and nothing more, the meaning of the word would become the meaning of the thing. Yet, if a thing has not one meaning rather than another, what name shall we assign to it?

But now, reversing the order of relation, let us ask whether meaning can exist apart from things and from words. In a way, I have already sufficiently answered this question when I distinguished, within "meaning," between "import" and an inarticulate psychic entity. But the matter deserves a more concrete and conclusive statement. A reference to the general method, results, and aspirations of the scientist will supply us with the kind of answer that is now demanded. I shall investigate the matter in the form of the question: Is it possible to have meanings with no infusion from words or sensuous things? The full reason for this question will appear in a moment when I turn to the enumeration of the most distinguishing elements and conventions of poetry.

Every science claims to deal with a *general* truth; the consideration of many things in their "common" character rather than in their divergency. Science, by aspiration and aim, also deals very largely with an *imperceptible* rather than with a sensuous form of reality. I refer particularly to the fundamental assumptions and entities of chemistry and physics. Then, again, every science aspires to a causal or quantitative statement of the *relations* existing between things; for science, it must be emphasized, is not primarily concerned with the full and exhaustive description of *things*, but with the *relations* affirmed to exist between things. Moreover, each science restricts itself to a specific group of such relations. Through this restriction, of course, each science becomes circumscribed in the range and the kind of

description that it assigns to a thing; and, in this practice, although it is said to lose in breadth but to gain in accuracy, the fact is, that it merely forfeits one order of breadth for another, an extensive breadth for an intensive one. Hence a botanist or a geologist is as apt as the poet, and often he is more apt, to glorify a flower or a stone, although his standpoint is different from the poet's.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the scientist manifests hostility to all psychophysical influences, wherein, as in his devotion to *relations* as opposed to *things*, he again reveals himself in sharp contrast to the poet, whose viewpoint of things, particularly as disclosed in the lyric, is psychophysical. All these forms of the scientist's aspirations may be viewed as culminating in one; namely, his subordination or complete repudiation of the sensuous aspect of existence through his superior faith in a so-termed imperceptible order of existence. The scientist, then, is commonly thought to gain his special clarity of vision in the imperceptible sphere, and it is here, by his own report, that his meanings originate and take their shape. Hence our question: Are these meanings, as the scientist maintains, free from all infusion from the sensuous aspect of things and words?

The mathematician offers the simplest illustration of these varied aims with the inevitable recoil upon them of the facts he is disposed to ignore or deny.

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<sup>4</sup>Such facts should put an end to the undefined use of "imagination" in connection with poetry. The difference in its use in poetry and in science is due to its control in science by cause and effect, and in poetry, by the psychophysical principle. The usual interpretation of this term by critics is a lingering vestige of a discarded faculty-psychology. The facts that follow should aid in ridding us of this bit of fiction.

Thus "the line," with which he pretends to deal in geometry, is not sensuously visible, but, as he tells us, is merely conceived. A line, for him, is a direction (relation) between two points, which, in turn, are also, for him, of a conceived, not of a perceived existence; for his interest in a point extends merely to its use as an element in a line, and his interest in a line extends only to its function in the production of a surface; and so on, to the end of his science. In all this thinking, he is motivated by one or more of the aspirations and aims enumerated in the previous paragraph. Dealing, as he tells us, with an imperceptible rather than with a sensuous form of reality, or with a general rather than with an individual aspect of things, or with relations rather than with things, or with a strictly objective truth rather than with a subjective modification of it, his aim is to keep his meanings thus formed as pure as possible from any infusion from sensuous things or from words, that, in their ordinary substantive reality, are too freely moulded within and upon the sensuous side of things. Hence the readiness of the scientist to use non-linguistic symbols or words with a new synthetic structure. He fully realizes the subtle and insidious influence of words, and this he would thus forestall. But the so-called general truths must also be described as well as named; yet how is he to succeed in his declared repudiation of the sensuous side of things? He professes with unceasing re-iteration that he merely thinks and speaks in terms of non-sensuous symbols and non-sensuous ideas. But let him begin in his description at what-

ever point he chooses, with the barest of bare symbols, whether linguistic or mental, and he will soon find, if he is as keen in psychology as he is in mathematics, that he can never wholly prevent the importation into his symbols of what constitutes the ultimate foundation of all knowledge and speech; namely, the sensuous elements in their invariable conjunction with the affective and conative aspects of human life. He may profess the contrary, and he may even try to do as he professes; but his professed achievement is both psychologically and philosophically impossible; "a concept without a percept is empty." Here we may again summarize the claims that language, imagery, and motor elements are essential to the existence or structure of an idea. Nor may any scientist to-day, without inviting the ridicule or contempt of scientists in other spheres, run counter to truths as well established by them as his order of truths may be established by him. Hence it is not surprising that, when a psychologist turns an eye upon the sciences of the type described, he finds their whole sphere of *pure conceptual* entities shot through with *sensuous* properties of one kind or another; so that even an X, Y, and Z may come to hop about in the world of a mathematician with a vitality little short of soulful. The medieval scientist, much more naive, but, apparently, epistemologically more sound, freely admitted the existence of veritable angels on the point of his abstract needle. Hence, by the consideration of such facts as I have presented, or by a consideration of the wreckage with which every science is strewn, we may learn to what extent

the professed symbols of science, linguistic or mental, convert themselves into things at once sensuous and vital. *Meanings can neither attain nor preserve a purity that is uncolored or unaffected by things.*

As stated several pages back, there is a recurrent claim that poetry in its contrast to science presents its truth or meaning "concretely to the eye of the mind." This statement takes its color from the order of facts which I have just adduced, but, thus far, I have told only half the story that is bound up with science, and that, the darker half. Science is, in actual truth and in its declared aspirations, as devoted to things (that is, to facts) as it is to these professed aspects of reality just recited. Nor am I, in a treatise on art, called upon to resolve, but merely to note this paradox. The plain facts are that modern science differs not only from poetry, but from the science and the speculative philosophy that preceded it, by the one fact that science demands tangible and concrete evidence for every step it takes in the formation of its conclusions. The prominence assigned by scientists to facts verges, in its insistence, upon an obsession. The vast development in laboratories and the central place that is given to experimental research, is its most outward proof and evidence. What has poetry to offer as a fair off-set to these concrete modes of thought? So the above formula merely indicates how easily we may be led astray in our thinking if we are not careful and exhaustive in our survey of things. From the standpoint of one order of facts, the formula seems pertinent; from the standpoint of another order of them, it is absolutely



false. Poetry is not more, but less concrete than science. Poetry, of course, is more concrete than science in its language (words); it is also more concrete than science in its reference to the *sensuous* side of things, for science, as chemistry, for example, deals with what it terms the *properties* of things, not their qualities; that is, chemistry deals with things primarily in their active or causal relation to other things, whereas poetry is more directly interested in their sensuous qualities; and it is this dominance of the sensuous element, supported by a home-made philosophy, that encourages the critic to speak of poetry as more *concrete* than science. But who, in strict accuracy of thought, has the most concrete or actual conception of a flower, Peter Bell, Wordsworth, or the botanist? Or who has the most concrete or actual conception of a stone, the layman, the geologist, the mineralogist, or the psychologist? None of them, whether scientist or layman, has the same conception of a flower or stone; but who is to pronounce which of them has the more concrete or actual conception? Only when we include these various aspects of a thing in a *verbal meaning* do we approach anything like a unified conception of a thing in the fulness of its reality.<sup>5</sup>

But if poetry differs from science in the fact that its words, its meanings, and its "things" are more deliberately sensuous, then it is the *sensuous* imagery

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<sup>5</sup>Reality therefore is revealed to us in an organized body of knowledge rather than in Neilson's "sense of fact." To our senses, the sun appears small and near; to science it is large and at a great distance. It is dangerous to use an unedited phrase of popular discourse in a proposed theory.

that is bound up with each of these elements wherein poetry would *seem* to differ from science. Since, however, the truths of each science are more intensive in their breadth, and, in the aggregate of the sciences, also more extensive in their characterization of a thing than are the truths of the best poetry, whether considered singly or in the aggregate, it follows that poetry, instead of being more concrete, is merely more provincial and circumscribed; for the more complete and cosmopolitan description of the flower and the stone, as an actual fact, is to be found not in poetry, as generally defined, but in the pages of science.

But let us not, in this analysis, proceed too fast. Thus far we have reached the conclusion that poetry is more sensuous in its conception of words, meanings, and things. Another way of stating this fact is to say that it emphasizes things rather than relations. But poetry differs from science in several other particulars. As already admitted, it differs in the use to which it puts the musical and the unmusical aspect of words. In addition, poetry includes the psychophysical individual in assigning measure and boundary to words, meanings, and things. Science, in its determination of reality, aims to eliminate the psychophysical principle; poetry, on the other hand, utilizes this principle, not only for the purpose of injecting an increased reality into things, a tendency endorsed by the best in the modern development of philosophy and psychology, but also as a basis for securing a *conviction*; and here poetry is akin to oratory. A

scientist, in order to induce conviction, takes us directly to things in their most carefully analyzed form. These things, thus carefully prepared, he brings into relation to other facts prepared with the same degree of care and analysis. After that, his sole principle for conviction is causation. If the facts react and effect each other in a given way, that for the scientist is final; and reason, here is coerced in the admission of the facts whether it will or not. Thus a scientist's final appeal, we may say, is to the logic or eloquence resident in a final or ultimate appearance of things when brought in conjunction with the most ultimate principle in the universe; namely, that of causation. The poet, on the other hand, stands upon no such order of presentation. To gain an acceptance for a thing in the rough way in which he presents it, he makes an appeal to the irrational side of man's nature, to his desires or affections, to his fears or hopes, to his ambition or vanity, to his patriotism or love, to his interest in nature, beauty, words, color, wit, humor, music, etc. Hence the poet proceeds by the principle of suggestion, just as the scientist proceeds by the principle of analysis brought into conjunction with causation. Naturally, the logical order in which both of them present their facts will also materially differ; the poet is picturesque (qualitative) and analogical, whereas the scientist is symbolic and either quantitative or causal in his arrangement and grouping of facts; the poet demands no laboratory in any accurate sense of the term, whereas the scientist does; the poet approximates

the method of hypnotism;<sup>6</sup> the scientist, the methods, inductive and deductive, embodied in abstract reason. Which of these two modes of procedure, we may then ask, is superior? And we may answer that neither is superior to the other, since they are fundamentally different. Science is essential for its extended and more precise conception of the world; but poetry, as an off-set to the non-sensuous aims and to the inevitable specialization of a science, is also important for the purpose of keeping the world more humanized and in a balanced whole; and, in this field, its competitor is philosophy. Moreover, as long as man remains (to speak in numbers) ninety-five per cent. irrational in his principle of action, poetry may serve to stir men to action and perfection in a way that science, more chaste but also more cold, will never succeed in doing; and here its closest rival is the pulpit. But poetry, by its less restrained use of the sensuous elements, whether in conjunction with words, meanings, things, or music, and by its more exclusive reference to the psychophysical principle in its dual capacity to create reality and a conviction, is beset with dangers which far exceed those

<sup>6</sup> Bergson writes, "that the object of art is to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality, and thus to bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realize the idea that is suggested to us and sympathize with the feeling that is expressed \* \* \*. The poet is he with whom feelings develop into images, and the images themselves into words which translate them while obeying the laws of rhythm. In seeing these images pass before our eyes we in our turn experience the feeling which was, so to speak, their emotional equivalent; but we should never realize these images so strongly without the regular movements of the rhythm by which our soul is lulled into self-forgetfulness, and, as in a dream, thinks and sees with the poet." *Time and Free Will*, pp. 14-15.

which I have enumerated in connection with science. But at this point, the functions of the critic begin and mine end.

We might, of course, if we so chose, follow the critics in their analysis and classification of poetry under such heads as classicism, realism, idealism, romanticism, impressionism, and sentimentalism. It is needless to add that this classification centers about the affirmed elements and subject-matter of poetry. But, in so far as my formula and its exposition was intended precisely to meet these conditions, it, in conjunction with the actual history of poetry, may be utilized in the control of such discussion. I repeat that poetry is bound up, in the first place, with words, meanings, and things in their subtle, intricate and far-reaching interrelation; secondly, that this substance is made distinctive by the accepted (conventional) correlation with it of music; by the accepted mode of logical procedure (the free use of sensuous imagery and the psychophysical principle in determining the special form of its substance); and by the accepted appeal to an apprehension under the control of sensibility, affection, and conation, rather than by an appeal to it under the more direct control of analysis united with the principles of quantity or causation. In a discussion of classicism, realism, idealism, etc., it is also important to remember that neither poetry nor things as a whole exist in nature with a prefixed measure and boundary. Dogmatism is fatal in the discussion of any problem. To guard against it, the fundamentals that are involved must be clearly

grasped. These I have attempted to present.<sup>7</sup> Nor should a light that is intended to bring into evidence the bony structure and inner functions of an organism be also expected to gratify with a mere surface play of light and shade.

I started out with the thesis that poetry was no exception to the primacy of the material over the psychological principle. The proof is, that poetry is essentially a matter of words, music, and meaning in its objective and subjective implications. Divest meaning of this definite implication, and it approaches sentimentalism. But sentimentalism itself is incapable of articulation save through its dependence upon certain perceptive factors. So that, if poetry were really the subjective thing so commonly described, it would have to assume the form of a wrought-up inward state incapable of even so much as an outward gasp. No one would be ready to admit, however, that a mere orgiastic state was poetry. If not, then we have the *reductio ad absurdum* of the claim that poetry is dominantly subjectivistic, whether defined in terms of life, feeling, or imagination in their usual abstraction. For once we attempt to rectify these abstractions, our inevitable passage will be in the direction of concrete things.

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<sup>7</sup>Thus my account of poetry ends where that of painting begins. The method I elaborated in connection with painting also applies to poetry.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Music

What constitutes the nature or substance of music? Simple as this question appears, it causes endless controversy. I shall answer it after the manner pursued in the previous chapter; that is, I shall attempt its solution without elaborating separately each of the four questions stated at the beginning of the chapter on painting.

There is no doubt that music is of all the arts the most unique and independent. Poetry has its close analogue in prose, and painting a formidable rival in nature; but where in nature have we the analogue or rival of a fugue or a sonata? Even the songs of birds have but a specious resemblance to the carefully measured quality and delicate variety typical of music in its most developed forms. In point of bare distinction, then, music is by far the most unique of the three arts; and it is also the most independent, since the elements that it incorporates, as melody, harmony, rhythm, and tone-coloring, are more homogeneous, and, for that reason, less subject to the control of divergent and radically conflicting aims and laws. Unaided and unhampered by what is foreign, music possesses its own inherent logic and eloquence. But music for all that is not a matter of bare acoustics. As was shown with painting, music also has a foundation in a psychophysical principle.

It is a commonplace in psychology that sensations are bound up with the other phases of the psychic life; and it is alone by reference to this psychic-complex that their substantive character is properly determined. The James-Lange theory with its physiological foundation of the emotions suggests one aspect of this psychic interdependence, and the ideomotor or behavioristic theory another. Moreover, sound invokes the psychophysical principle on a larger scale than do the sensations of sight; and it is for this reason, as has been aptly said, that music loosens the heart and the feet as only wine loosens the tongue. It may also be added that it is by virtue of its relation to a psychophysical principle that music justifies its frequent designation as at once the most ethereal and material of the arts. It is regarded as the most ethereal not only because so fugitive, but because the quality of *permanence* is, with the average individual, an attribute of what is substantially real. This quality so generally ascribed to music in its contrast to the other arts, has its further foundation in the fact that sight and touch, rather than hearing, are the more ingrained of our senses for determining what is "tangible." Yet withal, music is the most material of the arts; not only because music is less able than painting and poetry to body forth a meaning or a reality other than its own,<sup>1</sup> but because sound commands and subjugates where color merely invites and persuades. For these reasons

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<sup>1</sup>The non-representative character of music has been ably defended by Gurney in "The Power of Sound" and by Hanslick in "The Beautiful in Music."



music is dominantly although not narrowly sensuous in its nature. In one aspect, then, music is the most ethereal; but, in another aspect, it is the most material of the arts thus far considered. Surely a phenomenon so curiously compounded requires our careful inspection before we venture forth upon the wings of theory.

There is something strangely intimate and compelling in the power of music, and it is here where most of the eulogy and extravagance heaped upon it find their roots. Literature abounds with its fabled might. Thus we are told that the song of Orpheus "subdued wild beasts, arrested the course of the waves, and made the trees and rocks dance." Legends such as this are without number. That music may administer a cure to the body and soul, has also been abundantly recited; and, although most of these tales are occult, some of them support accepted practices of to-day. Music, too, is the favored shrine for the fatuous worship of mystics; and even the critics, supposedly hardened by their trade, only too commonly affect to see in music a depth beyond depths and a height beyond heights. Taken in the aggregate, such records signify a tribute to its unfathomable power. But, mysticism aside, the one fact remains that music is to be explained not exclusively by its acoustic constitution, but also by its relation to the peculiar nature and constitution of man. Its irresistible grip upon man remains unquestioned. The only problem is as to the cause. No art, certainly, enjoys the wide suffrage of music, whether in the form of a monotonous chant by primitive man, or in the

form of ubiquitous rag-time, or in the form of the more restricted enjoyment of a symphony; and the reason for this is, that music of all the arts is predominantly the most physiological and the most direct.

As to the elements properly incorporated in music, there is little practical disagreement; most of the disagreement to my mind results from the erroneous interpretation that is commonly given to these elements. All writers are agreed that music has its foundation in a measured tone reduced to a specific scale. They are also agreed that all development in a piece of music is relative to its so-called tonic; that is, "unless a certain measurable, fundamental tone be sounded on a musical instrument, there can be no auxiliary tones and consequently no harmonic progression."<sup>2</sup> The student of music, will, also, soon discover "that there are two great classes of forms—polyphonic and monophonic—many-voiced and single-voiced. In the former he will find that the organism is affected by repeating (at a distance of one or more measures) in a second voice what has already been sung or played by a first. The complexity of this system of repetition may be made very great, as in a four-voiced canon, and the system is capable of marvellous detail and compactness, as in the fugue. The monophonic system, on the other hand, makes its repetitions within the limits of a single-voiced melody having a subsidiary accompaniment. Its simplest form is song, and its highest the symphony."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Edward Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*.

<sup>3</sup> W. J. Henderson, *What is Good Music*.

The elements of music may also be roughly grouped under several heads. First, there are what may be termed, the constituent elements,—melody, harmony, rhythm, tone-coloring, and what, for lack of a better term, may be designated as dynamics. Secondly, there are the constructive principles—pitch, time, tonality, unity in variety, consonance and dissonance. Thirdly, there are such conventional elements as the scale, the whole or fractional note, the bar, the measure, etc., and, lastly, such conventional structures as the song, fugue, sonata, opera, etc. This fourfold classification must not be taken as hard and fixed. It will suffice our immediate purpose, and, later, I shall enter the necessary amendment.

In regard to the first group, the problem has arisen as to whether music is more properly identified with all or with only one or some of the five so-called constituent elements. Such discussion, however, has its foundation in the error of conceiving of music as if it existed with a pre-ordained measure and boundary, capable of an abstract definition.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, music exists only as history produced it; and in that history, each of the elements enumerated has been given an equal degree of emphasis, even though the length of its history may vary, due to the ex-

<sup>4</sup> Music, no doubt, is prefixed in its development by such fundamental conditions, physical and psychological, as underlie consonance and dissonance, or in such conditions, physical, psychological, or conventional, as underlie melody, rhythm, and tone-coloring. But, as the history of music only too loudly proclaims, conditions, once thought fixed, vary. How then are we to gauge the music of yesterday or the music of to-day? Here is the burning problem. H. R. Moore presents an interesting study on *The Genetic Aspect of Consonance and Dissonance*. Psychological Monographs, Vol. XVII, No. 2, Sept. 1914.

gency of an earlier or later discovery. But with music, as with painting, a constituent element may be under varying conditions either a *means* or an *end*. When a constituent element functions as a means, it becomes in part, or better, by function a constructive principle. But since not one of the five elements enumerated as constituent lacks this dual capacity, there would be as little foundation for the statement that melody is more ultimate than harmony, as for the statement that harmony is more ultimate than melody, or that either of them is more ultimate than rhythm, tone-coloring, or dynamics. They may, in fact, in the same composition, as in a symphony, alter their relative rank with each division.

But music may be discussed ostensibly from the standpoint of these elements and yet, from a confusion in problems, be far removed in its relevancy to music as generally accepted and historically approved. Thus Helmholtz started a line of inquiry that in a sense represents the most orthodox scientific discussion of it. Passing through a long list of writers, it finds its culmination in a recent book by an authority of no less rank than H. J. Watt. This line of inquiry is somewhat technical. Watt's position may be briefly summarized in his own language. He attempts to show "that the stuff and structure common to all tones" is exclusively a matter of pitch. "The most characteristic difference between tones," he writes, "is undoubtedly given by their pitch, and it is more or less natural to think that having several pitches means having several tones."<sup>5</sup> Tones, of

<sup>5</sup>The Psychology of Sound, p. 56.

course, do not occur "in which only one pitch is distinguishable;" every tone, he holds, is a pitch-complex or mass. As a result, "it has become a matter of common practice to speak of the lower and upper 'partials' of a tone and of the fundamental partial, without the regular addition of the substantive usually implied—tone. [That is, the term 'pitch' exhausts the full meaning of the term 'tone.'] The term 'partial' thus comes to have not an adjective, but a substantive meaning. This practice seems to me to be a happy one."<sup>6</sup> For, as he adds, partial tones "yield us primarily only partial *pitch*es."<sup>7</sup> He, upon the basis of this analysis, draws several conclusions regarding the *substance* of *music*.<sup>8</sup> When several tones are produced after one another, he writes, "they create a special interest through the experience of motion which arises from successive changes of pitches." [dynamics]. They also provide an interest because of the ease, or lack of it, with which one pitch-complex passes into another; for they thus enable us to prepare for the tone next to come [melody presumably, but rather dynamics]. "We bear these relations in mind all the way through a melody and see the melody as a whole in relation to them" [tonality]. And because certain pairs or sets of tones when given simultaneously approximate much more closely to the perfect balance of the pure tone, we naturally find certain groupings of tones much more preferable than others [harmony]. In brief, music "is the agreeable unity [an abstraction]

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 213-216.

of what we merely feel and experience through sense. The beauty of musical harmonies does not rest upon the interest of representation, but merely upon the intrinsic relations of sounds [pitches] as heard."

Several objections may be raised against this type of theorizing as to the substance of music. For if a tone as Watt affirms is nothing more than a colorless pitch-complex from the standpoint of *acoustics*, it is certainly something far more concrete, colorful, and vital from the standpoint of *music*. Moreover, if a musical tone were as colorless as Watt depicts, the mystery would be why men should rather pursue it in its "motion" than to pursue the motion of almost anything else interesting and tangible. Or again, if pitch-complexes provide an interest by the ease with which they prepare us for the tone next to come, what gratification could possibly result in such a process of expectation if the thing that eventually materializes is a mere colorless entity? For sensational *quality* is the one thing he combats, and this he would replace by an "agreeable unity" experienced "through sense." It is for this reason that melody for him evaporates into some form of pitch-*motion*. I do not deny that this sort of inquiry may be of interest and even of use in the field of pure acoustics, but, in spite of its orthodox claim, it certainly has little bearing upon the actual phenomenon of music. The error committed by this school of writers is of the same texture as the one committed by the general chemist when disposing of water, snow, and ice from the exclusive standpoint of their origin in hydrogen and oxygen. From this standpoint water is not

water, nor is ice ice, but both ice and water, in spite of their apparent differences, are said to be nothing but  $H_2O$ ; and music with Watt is not a composition of distinctive and relatively unique elements, as harmony, melody, rhythm, and dynamics, but a pitch-mass or motion.\*

There is no doubt that the constituent elements of music are susceptible of reduction; but in this connection it is well to remember that if music in its actual concert-production does not exist with a prefixed measure and boundary, neither does an element exist with a prefixed measure and boundary, however far or minutely we proceed in the analysis. *An element, as such, is always relative to the conditions it involves.* Thus, from the standpoint of lemonade, water, sugar, and lemon-juice are the ultimates and not the chemical elements into which each of these ultimates may be resolved. And should the chemist take issue with this statement, I would merely have to call the physicist to my aid, armed as he is with his electrons; for he in turn would question the finality of the chemist's assertion much after the manner in which the chemist may question mine. In such a

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\*The history of philosophy and science gives evidence of the fact that three principles of equal rank aid in the determination of reality: the principle of *antecedents* which Watt and the scientist usually emphasize; the principle of *consequences* which modern pragmatism stresses; and the principle of sensuous reality which not only the men of the street but also the so-called empirical philosophers emphasize. Anyone of these three principles is as ultimate and as authoritative as the others. The one that I am now emphasizing as the only one of direct significance from the viewpoint of art as opposed to the viewpoint of science, is the third or empirical principle. For further discussion of the matter, read Chapter II.

situation, who can claim to have *the* elements? In the meantime, the subject of dispute would have passed from lemonade to one that is purely theoretical and as such incapable of solution, unless we again come back to the matter in hand, namely, lemonade, and from the standpoint of its actual production, ask what actual elements in what actual relations are capable of producing it. If in our inquiry we pass beyond water, sugar, and lemon-juice, and yet, in this more extended investigation, remain unable to produce a better quality of lemonade, or, perchance, unable to produce lemonade at all, I would describe the method, not as more thorough, but as less sane. So it is with music. The only *decomposition* of it that counts is the one that makes its full *composition* possible. Not even so keen a thinker as Watt can accomplish the unachievable; namely, the production of anything, however simple, by the aid of a single principle. By the help of phrases and question-begging much, of course, may *appear* accomplished. But appearances are apt to be deceptive, and a thinker must be constantly on his guard. For the reasons adduced, then, I feel that the elements numerated above—melody, harmony, rhythm, tone-coloring and dynamics—are the elements of *music* even though they may not be the elements of *sound* in the abstract or as wholly metamorphosed by theory.

But the enumeration of the five constituent elements may be challenged in still other ways. It may be held that I omit a consideration of the psychological elements; and it may even be held that the psychological elements assume priority over the five acoustic



elements. I refer to the conclusions commonly stated by another order of psychological investigators, and also to those issuing out of the debate between classicism and romanticism. The controversy between classicism and romanticism assumes several forms, but the only one with which I shall be concerned pertains to the one-sided claim that music in its actual substance is fundamentally representative and psychological rather than acoustic. From this standpoint, classicism, in so far as it exhibits an emphasis upon the more purely constructive and intellectual side of music, would itself resolve into a form of this very wide psychological trend. I shall examine this trend and relate it to what is also emphatically affirmed of music from the standpoint of the elements already enumerated. My own position is that the elements of music are neither purely acoustic nor purely psychological; each of the acoustic elements incorporates or embodies psychological elements, with the center of gravity, however, more specially focused on the acoustic element. The conception of the psychic-triad, already so much insisted upon in this book, would, to be sure, put any boasted subjectivism into its proper place. It would also help to correct any narrow conception of the purely acoustic aspect of music. A simple illustration, however, may not prove amiss.

Bread is to be distinguished from hunger and satiety, just as a tone is to be distinguished from a feeling; but bread when viewed by a hungry individual is a different thing from bread viewed by an individual already satiated. Or a child in the eyes of a mother

is a being of a different status from the one assigned to it by a grouchy neighbor. Now the point that I wish to establish is, that the bread for the hungry man is more valuable as bread, not as hunger; and that the child for a mother is more valuable as a child, not as a feeling. The object or being on the one hand and the psychological facts on the other, when once brought into relation, are no longer wholly separate or divorced, but *fused*. Moreover, in ordinary practice, we rarely if ever separate the psychological increment or addition from the object or being. When we do separate them in theory, as is also common, the danger lies in making a fully-fledged entity of a fractional reality. Moreover, to continue the illustration, a child also takes on an alterable significance in every other relation that it may enter, whether the relation or reference of it be to work, maintenance, or whatnot; and it is only by means of these references that it acquires its full substantive reality.<sup>9</sup> The same holds true of every acoustic element in its give-and-take relation, not only to the psychophysical individual, but to every other acoustic element. "A theme, harmonized with the common chord, sounds differently if harmonized with the chord of the sixth; a melody progressing by an interval of the seventh produces quite a distinct effect from one progressing by an interval of the sixth. The rhythm, the volume of sound, or the timbre, each alters the specific character of a theme

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<sup>9</sup>I enlarged upon this truth at some length in the previous chapter.

entirely.”<sup>10</sup> It is in this way only that a given acoustic element reveals its *full* and *complete* variety and richness. The danger lies in referring to it, as we so commonly do, in some restricted form of its abstraction. For these reasons, as briefly illustrated, I have come to describe music as a matter of vital elements in vital relations.

In order to get the affirmed psychological elements before us with reasonable fulness, I cannot do better than to quote from *An Experimental study of Musical Enjoyment* by H. P. Weld.<sup>11</sup> His investigation, he tells us, “aims to make a contribution to the psychology of the appreciation and enjoyment of music.” He summarizes his findings under the following heads:

“1. The enjoyment of music is a complex experience. The components of this experience are or may be:

(a) A pleasurable emotion which is due to the timbres of the instruments and to their nuances of tone. [This is tone-coloring.]

(b) A pleasurable reaction on the part of the observer himself to the rhythms of the musical composition.

(c) Pleasurable associations which are the product, in the main, of past experiences,—associations which have now become more or less familiar to the auditor.

(d) Pleasure derived from the observer’s play of imagery,—the latter being itself a product of the musical stimuli.

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<sup>10</sup> Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*.

<sup>11</sup> *American Journal of Psychology*, 1912, p. 245.

(e) A pleasurable mood which is usually characterized by its persistence, although it may change with changes in the character of the composition.

(f) \* \* \* there is present also an intellectual activity which can but be described as an analysis of melodic and harmonic structure, and an appreciation of the skill or dexterity of the performance itself \* \* \*.

"2. These various components are far from being of equal value in the appreciation and enjoyment of music \* \* \*. Visual imagery makes the least important contribution; and the contributions which flow from the observers' motor reactions constitute the most essential factor for all auditors except those whose attitude is of the purely intellectual sort.

"3. Just as in the average normal auditor, emotional enjoyment is a product chiefly of motor imagery and motor reaction, so his intellectual appreciation is a function almost exclusively of auditory imagery and of intellectual processes based thereon.

"4. Music is powerless to portray a definite picture in any uniform or universal sense, or to convey the same group of imagery into the minds of its auditors."

Weld's survey is of less value for what from the standpoint of *psychology* it includes, than for what from the standpoint of *music* it excludes. Of the five constituent elements enumerated above, he includes tone-coloring and rhythm. Melody, harmony, and dynamics are displaced by such subjective or psychological factors as imagery, motor-reactions, moods, intellectual activity, and craftsmanship. And yet, under number four, he asserts that music has no

representative character. He should have proceeded one step further and concluded that music, save for tone-coloring and rhythm, possesses, in his account, no distinctive character or substance of any kind, except for the varied subjective effects which it is said to induce; that is, something to which he all but denies an external existence would seem, notwithstanding, to have the capacity to produce a variety of subjective effects. The absurdity is obvious. Moreover, the psychological elements enumerated remain divorced and subjective if for no other reason than that they lack something external with which they might *fuse*; yet this external factor is forced upon our attention not only by the sensuous character of music but by the demands of the psychic-triad. I see little difference between a survey of this kind by an experimental psychologist and such an estimate of music as a critic of the romantic school would offer. For proof of their resemblance, I shall turn to *What is Good Music?* by the well-known critic, W. J. Henderson.

"Music," Henderson writes, "is an art which expresses moods, and it expresses them with definiteness, tremendous eloquence, and overwhelming influence." Again: "It was Beethoven who first definitely aimed at making emotional utterance the purpose of music, and from his time dates the development of the knowledge of the full resources of the tone art as the wordless poetry of the soul." The sensuous aspect, for him, merely "embraces that part of music which appeals solely to the physical sense of hearing. It is that which in common parlance tickles the ear."

Tone-coloring, he writes in another place, which is "the most absolutely sensuous factor of all, ceases to be simply that when it is employed with an intellectual or an emotional purpose. But tone-color, being the most sensuous, and therefore the most easily dazzling, is the factor which is most abused in recent music."

Here again we have the emphasis placed upon the subjective factors, and through his disposition to overlook or minimize the objective factors, he, too, is unable to place the results of the psychological factors where they belong. Hence for him the substance of music is *emotion* instead of *sound*, "the poetry of the *soul*" rather than the poetry of *tone*. That is, music, instead of being made more vital and significant by the incorporation of the psychological factors which it naturally evokes and enlists, is either dispensed with entirely, or reduced to that which merely "tickles the ear." The analogue is found in the illustration of a mother who values her child not *because* of the feelings which the child may excite, but *for the sake* of the feelings that the child excites. In life, we would term such divorce and emphasis vicious sentimentalism; in music, the same designation applies to the analogous divorce and emphasis, and it applies with an equal force to either Henderson or Weld, both of whom, of course, I have quoted merely because their theories are typical of a wide-spread fallacy.

As a slight off-set to Henderson's view, let me briefly turn to another critic supposedly of the opposite school,—classicism. Hanslick in *The Beautiful in Music* defends the intellectual conception and the

purely acoustic structure of music. He holds "that music is *constructive* in its nature, and, as such, it is purely *objective*. \* \* \* This objective something, is, in this case, the purely *musical* features of a composition." (The italics are not mine.) But under a pressure emanating from romanticism, he continues, "it is, aesthetically, quite correct to speak of a theme as having a sad or noble accent, but not as expressing the sad or noble feelings of the composer." In other words, Hanslick feels the need of correlating the subjective facts of the musical experience with the objective, but, unable to do so, he concludes that "the power which music possesses of profoundly affecting the nervous system cannot be ascribed so much to the *artistic* forms created with its appeal to the mind as to the *material* with which music works and which Nature has endowed with certain inscrutable affinities of a physiological order." In this conclusion, however, he errs both by what he would include and by what he would exclude. He would seem to imply that music in its purely constructive aspect is a bare photographic apprehension of organized but empty acoustic elements, and that music, naturally, in this conception of it, fails "profoundly to affect the nervous system;" whereas in those aspects of music where the profound effects upon the nervous system are observable, we deal not with the "artistic forms," but with "the material" out of which the empty and purely intellectual "artistic forms" are created. In other words, his antagonism to such a position as Henderson champions is so rabidly acute that, rather than to acquiesce in it in the slightest degree, he prefers to con-

vert music into a bare ghost of its reality. But, unfortunately, even the barest abstraction, in order to be apprehended, demands a complex psychophysical process and some form of sensuous reality: "a concept without a percept is empty." On the other hand, when Hanslick is not too hard pressed by his antagonism to sensation and feeling, he widens his defense of the acoustic elements so as to embrace the psychological. The following extract is interesting: "the thrilling effect of a theme is owing, not to the supposed extreme grief of the composer, but to the extreme intervals; not to the beating of his heart, but to the beating of the drum; not to the craving of his soul but to the chromatic progression of the music;" that is, as Gurney expresses it, "when music seems to be yearning for unutterable things, it is really yearning only for the next note."<sup>12</sup>

I agree with Henderson in his *emphasis* upon the psychophysical principle just as I agree with Hanslick in his *emphasis* upon the constructive and acoustic character of music; but they, in the consideration of these factors, proceed by a method of *elimination*, whereas I emphasize the fact of their *integration*. Music does not merely denote hypothetical acoustic elements in acoustic relations, but it denotes vital elements in vital relations. What would we care for the elaborated history or destiny of a theme if the theme is not of itself interesting, rich rather than trivial, as we ordinarily say; or if the history that it is put through is not vital and exciting, varied and fruitful, illuminating and brilliant? This whole order of reality is,

<sup>12</sup>Quoted by Miss Puffer in *The Psychology of Beauty*.



without denial, dominantly acoustic, but it is not exclusively so. A musical element has its relation to a psychophysical organism as well as its relation to an instrument and to its tonal context. Nor dare we ignore this fact, since none of the other arts even approximate music in the extent to which it directly engages the motor-elements with their rich emotional concomitants. But the acoustic aspect, like color in painting, is basic. Color in painting is productive of many constituent factors; but they are the product of color as controlled by its own logical or mechanical laws; and, in some paintings, color, in addition, may be the leading interest. So it is with tone; it is, above all, under the control of acoustics, operating within the laws governing acoustic relations; but an acoustic element may be rich or poor, and for that very reason either more or less fruitful even in thematic possibilities. One theme is no sooner heard, but it electrifies; another is heard, but it leaves us stark and cold. To what factors is the difference due? This question we may never succeed in fully answering. So much, however, we may premise, that the result is a product of two factors and not of one; and that the factor of primary importance is the acoustic, which, like the beauty of color, acquires a sovereignty over man that reaches not only to his surface sensibility but to the full breadth and depth of his psychophysical being. What I cannot understand is the antagonism expressed alike by Henderson and Hanslick to the mere *sensuous* side of music. Are sound and color, as such, less worthy of interest and enjoyment than the emotions and the intellect? A man who enters upon the discussion of

the values of life should become acquainted with the full reach of the problem before he projects into the discussion of music a prejudice born of puritanism with its recoil from all the genial aspects of life. Music has no pre-ordained measure and boundary, and music, as history presents it, is complex; hence it may be viewed with equal validity from several standpoints: it may be viewed for its structural beauty or design; for its sensuous quality in melody, harmony, or tone-coloring; for its delicacy, grace, or vigor; for its gayety, majesty, or humor; or purely for its rhythm. Of these aspects, one may be more purely acoustic than another. Thus rhythm is clearly less acoustic in nature than either melody, harmony, or tone-coloring; but, as with painting, an art is not less truly defined in its nature by reason of its incorporation of an element somewhat foreign to its more dominant substance. Thus light, lines, and representation in painting are foreign to *color*, but they are not for all that foreign to *painting* in the best forms of its historic development. In fact, they may, under the guise of constructive principles, render as much service in the actual development of color as they may exact from color. The same facts hold true in regard to the elements constituting music. What, for example, does melody borrow from and lend to rhythm, or harmony, or tone-coloring, or dynamics; and so with each of them in their several orders of combination? This constitutes a problem that should be pursued but for which I have not the space. Instead, I shall turn to the problem of more direct concern for the general aim of this book: What foundation have these elements in a psycho-

physical organism, so that the contribution from this source may be more accurately gauged? The first question may be pursued by means of illustrations actually taken from music and thus directly experienced within that sphere. The second question may be pursued by the means and instrumentalities commonly devised by a psychologist.

Music sustains an intimate relation to the psychophysical individual. Yet psychology really has less to offer on this subject than in its study of painting. The one exception is that of rhythm.

On the subject of music, when unresolved into its elements, we are given such generalizations as the one offered by Ribot: "Music acts on the muscular system, on the circulation, the respiration, and the parts dependent on them."<sup>13</sup> Or we may be offered a quantitative generalization as the following by Scripture: "The force of will varies according to what we hear, feel or see. With the thumb-and-finger grip the greatest pressure I can exert during silence is 4 kilos. When some one plays the Giants' motive from the Rheingold my grip shows  $4\frac{1}{2}$  kilos. The slumber motive from Walkure reduces the power to  $3\frac{1}{4}$  kilos."<sup>14</sup> This line of research, however, continues sporadic, although its bearing upon music, from our standpoint, is evident.

Instead of examining the psychological effect of music in its complex forms, we may consider it from the standpoint of its constituent elements. Thus

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<sup>13</sup> The Psychology of the Emotions, p. 105.

<sup>14</sup> The New Psychology, p. 221. Weld's experimental study, from which we quoted a few pages back, belongs to this class of investigations.

Bingham, in his *Studies of Melody*, advances the conclusion that the unity, "which marks the difference between a mere succession of discrete tonal stimuli and a melody, arises not from the tones themselves: it is contributed by act of the listener. When tone follows tone in such a manner that the hearer can react adequately to each, when the response to the successive members of the series is not a series of separate or conflicting acts but rather in each instance only a continuation or further elaboration of an act already going forward, then tones are not felt as discrete, separate, independent, but as related to each other. And when finally, the series of tones comes to such a close that what has been a continuous act of response is brought to definite completion, the balanced muscular 'resolution' gives rise to the feeling of finality, and the series is recognized as a unity, a whole, a melody."<sup>15</sup>

We may in part accept this conclusion even while we deny that a *musical* progression is exclusively a product of "muscular movement." Bingham would surely not hold that "muscular movements" of themselves create the series of stimuli to which they are said merely to "respond." And in regard to their melodious succession, it would be more accurate to say that the tonal series is determined by the structure of the ear, the nature of the scale, the "vital" value of each note, individual design and preference, pitch, time, and by tonality. In a word, a melody, as commonly understood, is the product of a variety of conditions among which "muscular movements" may be

<sup>15</sup>Studies in Melody, The Psychological Review, Monograph Supplements, Vol. XII, No. 3, pp. 87-88.

a consolidating one. To this extent "muscular movements" would exercise a certain psychophysical control.

Rhythm, too, has been approached from many angles, and in harmony with the general trend of recent thought, has been aptly defined by Miss Puffer as "an embodied expectation." The phrase denotes an emphasis upon the *subjective* conditions of rhythm: "the objective stress in rhythm is but an emphasis on a stress that would be in any case to some degree subjectively supplied. Rhythm in music \* \* \* is then pleasurable because it is in every sense a favorable stimulation." (p. 163.) In fact, as Miss Puffer correctly subjoins, rhythm, when objectively presented, does not merely stimulate, it literally grips us. The nature of this subjective predisposition, to be sure, is differently explained by a number of theorists; but, from the standpoint of music, the only fact of importance is that rhythm, with its accompanying sense of ease and power, is essentially a psychophysical condition best realized through the medium of sound, and *projected back into sound*.

Rhythm in its abstract form, however, must not be confounded with its concrete existence in a musical work; for its control in any specific composition, its varied amplification or inhibition, is subjected not only to psychological but also to acoustic principles. The only conclusion, then, that we may draw from the standpoint of psychology is that music, by incorporating rhythm, is apt to receive a rich infusion of pleasurable significance because of the ingrained tendency thus to react upon the slightest cue and be-

cause of the sense of ease and power that accompany all forms of rhythmical experience. But we must also remember that the presence and development of rhythm in any piece of music is subject to a varying interest in man; to the place assigned to the other constituent elements of music; and to the laws bound up with its relation to them. Hence psychology plays a role in music, but only to the extent to which it makes itself subservient to the acoustic element. Hence he who truly exalts music in its *tonal* qualities will alone reap its richest beauty and significance,—tone enriched by the subjective factors.

I shall consider one more of the musical elements; namely, dynamics. Its general nature is described in a beautiful passage by Gurney. He writes: "It may be well to give one rough specimen of a description of this process by which the course of musical forms is perceived, if only for the sake of realizing how essentially indescribable it is. The melody, then, may begin by pressing its way through a sweetly yielding resistance to a gradually foreseen climax; whence again fresh expectation is bred, perhaps for another excursion, as it were, round the same centre but with a bolder and freer sweep, perhaps for a fresh differentiation whereof in turn the tendency is surmised and followed, to a point where again the motive is suspended on another temporary goal, till after a certain number of such involutions and evolutions, and of delicately poised leanings and reluctances and yieldings, the forces so accurately measured just suffice to bring it home, and the sense of potential and coming integration which has underlain all our provisional adjustments

of expectation is triumphantly justified. One such piece of description serves as well as a hundred, to show in what sort of remote way the Ideal Motion lends itself to terms of physical motion \* \* \*." <sup>16</sup>

But this element in music does not merely "lend itself to terms of physical motion;" it also lends itself to terms of psychological activity; and, as a result of the latter resemblance, romanticism finds another basis for its subjectivistic conclusions, namely, the voluntaristic. As construed by the romanticist, "the fundamental facts of the musical experience [namely, the facts of dynamics] are supremely fitted to bring about the illusion and the exaltation of the triumphant will." <sup>17</sup> Elsewhere the same author writes: "Music expresses and causes tension, strain, yearning \* \* \* But it does more; it satisfies these yearnings. It not only creates an expectation to satisfy it, but the expectation itself is of a poignant, emotional, personal character." <sup>18</sup> In this subordination of the musical to the psychological, we lose everything if we fail to keep in mind that the "yearning" as well as the "satisfaction" is bound up with something that creates a yearning and yields a satisfaction, and that something is *tone* in its musical presentation to a psychophysical individual. Great danger lurks in the romantic subordination of the acoustic element to the psychological; <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gurney: *The Power of Sound*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>17</sup> Miss Puffer: *The Psychology of Beauty*, p. 199.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> It represents the fallacy committed without exception by exponents of the *Einfühlung* Theory. They may be read, however, for their defense of psychophysical projection into art phenomena.

for the fact remains that dynamics is a product in the necessary development of music; that we may enjoy it as such, or that we may utilize it either in the development of the other acoustic elements, or as a means to psychological expression. But, as it appears in music, dynamics is particularized by tone; and every form of psychological conation is also particularized, for otherwise it would be a pure psychological abstraction. Hence, abstract the inevitable correlates or associates from either, and their distinctive characters would vanish.<sup>20</sup> If the two, however, notwithstanding their essential differences, still appear analogous, then the reason is found why music should absorb into its acoustic forms a rich infusion from the psychophysical sphere. When, however, we construe the situation romantically and, instead, substitute the vague forms of a possible conation for the varied elements in music, we not only contract our possible *musical* experience but, by thus reducing music to a zero, we also reduce the psychophysical experience identified with it to a zero. On the other hand, this very tendency to confound the two, the musical with the psychological, goes to prove that music is not only a matter of vital elements, but also a matter of vital relations.

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<sup>20</sup>It is only when we falsely abstract the dynamic aspect of music that it is neither psychological nor acoustic. As well abstract the other elements from music or such qualities as delicacy, grace, gayety, or humor.



## Index

### A

- Adams, H. F.....163N, 168N  
Alison..... 56  
Allen, Grant.....105-107  
Aristotle.....78-79, 102-103, 116, 150, 181-183, 184  
Arnold, Mathew..... 189  
Art, reality of, 11-12; relation to beauty, 15-21, 43-45;  
viewpoint of, 22-24; relation of technique, 24-27; con-  
fusion with psychological elements, 27-32; conceptions  
of art and their limitations, 33-45; the substance of, 46-  
50, 80-99; theories of, 50-124; and utility, 112-115;  
and nature, 115-118; and truth, 118-122; and morality,  
.....122-144  
Art-appreciation.....24-32, 43-44, 111, 173-179  
Art-criticism.....29-32, 43-45, 173-179  
Art-impulse.....108-109  
Art-production.....31, 42-45, 161-173  
Art-theory, its demands.....125  
Association Theory.....56

### B

- Baldwin.....150  
Beauty, power of, 11; ambiguity, 12; four historic conceptions;  
13-21; Plato's conception, 13-14; Kant's, 14-15; identi-  
fication with abstract principles, 16-18; plural aspect of,  
17-18; experimental conception, 18-20, 63-75; new con-  
ception, 13-21, 43-45; relation to art, 15-21, 43-45,  
83-84; hedonistic conception; 50-55; expression theory,  
55-63; material aspect of, 15; limitation of the psycho-  
logical element.....15-16  
Bergson.....216N  
Bingham.....240  
Brahms.....40-41  
Brown, G. B.....103-104  
Bullough, Edward.....64-65

## C

Carritt, I. F. ....	60
Cennini .....	170
Characterization .....	128-131
Chevreur .....	164
Chiaroscuro .....	142, 145, 169-171
Classicism .....	229
Classicists .....	156
Color .....	64-66, 142-148, 161-172
Colorists .....	146
Composition .....	158-161
Creation and Art .....	42-43, 80
Croce .....	57-58

## D

Darwin .....	109
Design .....	158-161
Differentia of art .....	89-93
Disinterestedness .....	84-89, 112-113
Draughtsmen .....	154, 155

## E

Einfühlung Theory .....	69-70
Elements of Music .....	223-244
Elements of Painting .....	125-137
Elements of Poetry .....	192-193, 217
Ellis, Havelock .....	65
Emotion Theory .....	57, 59-61
Experimental Theory 18-20, 63-79, 154-155, 157, 159-160, 162-163 .....	167-169
Expression Theory .....	55-63

## F

Feré .....	64
Florentines .....	154, 169-170
Formulas of art .....	80-89, 93-124
Freudian Theory .....	109N
Fromentin .....	29

## G

Genius and art .....	25-26, 42-43, 81
Giles, H. A. ....	130
Golden Section .....	157
Groos, K. ....	69N
Grosse, Ernst .....	12, 89, 107-108
Gurney .....	220N, 236, 242-243
Guyau .....	109

## H

Hanslick .....	220, 222, 230-231, 234-236
Hedonistic Theory .....	50-55, 70-73
Hegel .....	62, 80-81, 94
Helmholtz .....	224
Henderson .....	222, 233-234
Hildebrand .....	43, 86, 152-153
Hirn, Yrjö .....	59-60, 76-77, 84, 104-105, 108-109
Hogarth .....	156
Holman, C. J. ....	42

## I

Imitation .....	95-99, 150
Impressionism .....	156
Inspiration and art .....	81
Intellectualistic Theory .....	58, 61, 119

## J

Jastrow .....	163, 168
Jeffrey .....	56

## K

Kant .....	4, 51, 103
Knight .....	55

## L

La Farge .....	29, 134
Lange .....	77

Lasar .....	149, 162
Lee and Thomson .....	69-70, 109
Lenbach .....	129
Light .....	139-142
Lines .....	66, 153-157
Lipps, T .....	69N
Luminarists .....	142N

## M

Marshall, H. R. ....	51, 52, 109
Masaccio .....	170
Meaning .....	192-198, 208-212, 217, 218
"Meaning in Sensuous form" .....	93-95
Methods .....	89-93, 99-102, 107-108, 111-112
Moore, H. R. ....	223N
Morality and Art .....	122-124
Mueller, F. M. ....	140-141
Music, aspects of, 220; the power of, 221-222; the elements of, 223-224; subjectivistic aspect of, 228-234; formal aspect of, 234-236; psychophysical aspect of, 238-244; scientific view of .....	223-228

## N

Nature and art .....	115-118
Naturalism .....	116, 119
Nielson, W. A. ....	185-187, 213N

## O

Origin of Art .....	99-110
---------------------	--------

## P

Painting, elements of, 125-137; representation in, 126-133; 148-151; presentation in, 126-133; characterization in, 128-131; substantive value of, 137-159; classification, 142, 151, 154, 156; beauty of .....	159
Perfection .....	41-43, 82-83
Phillips, D .....	134, 137
Plato .....	18

Play-impulse .....	103-107
Poetry, Concrete vs. abstract .....	212-214
Poetry and the psychophysical individual .....	214-217
Poetry and science .....	208-217
Presentation .....	95-99, 126-133
Psychic triad .....	62-63, 76, 197N
Puffer, E. D. 66, 71, 72, 74N, 128-129, 146-150, 164, 192-193, 196, 236, 241 .....	243

## R

Raymond, G. W. ....	100
Reciprocity of art and the individual .....	178
Representation .....	95-99, 126-133, 148-151
Reynolds, Sir Joshua .....	25-26
Rhythm .....	66, 241
Ribot .....	239
Romanticism .....	229, 248
Ross, D. W. ....	169-171
Rowland, E. ....	116
Ruskin .....	61-62, 118-119, 135, 145, 147-148, 153

## S

Santayana .....	19, 50, 51, 52
Schiller, F. von .....	84-85, 94, 103-104
Scripture, E. W. ....	239
Self-Expression theory .....	57-59
Sex .....	109
Shades .....	161-162
Significance of art .....	11-12, 113-115
Space .....	151-153
Stedman .....	187-188
Substance of art .....	46-50, 80-90
Symmetry .....	66

## T

Tarde .....	150
Taste .....	81, 175, 179
Things .....	192, 204-207, 217

Tints .....	161-162
Tolstoi .....	12, 59, 123, 188-189
Tone .....	161-162
Truth and art .....	118-122
Turner .....	145, 153

## U

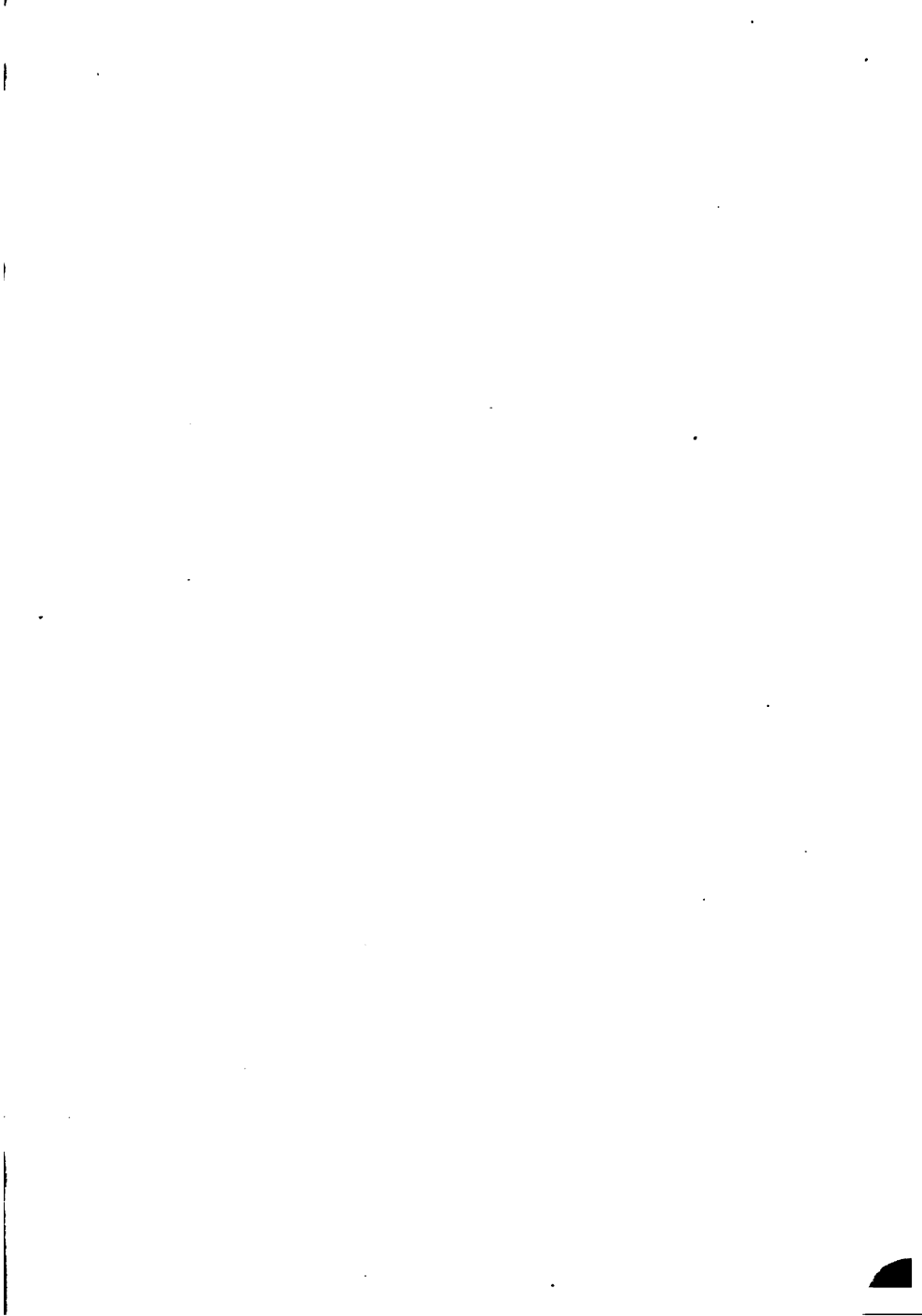
Umbrian .....	169-170
Utility and art .....	112-115

## V

Valentine, C. W. ....	66, 71, 143
Value .....	161-162
Van Dyke, J. C. ....	29, 56, 82, 126, 146, 165-166, 168
Verbal meaning .....	180-181, 203-204, 213
Véron .....	56-57
Vienese .....	169-170

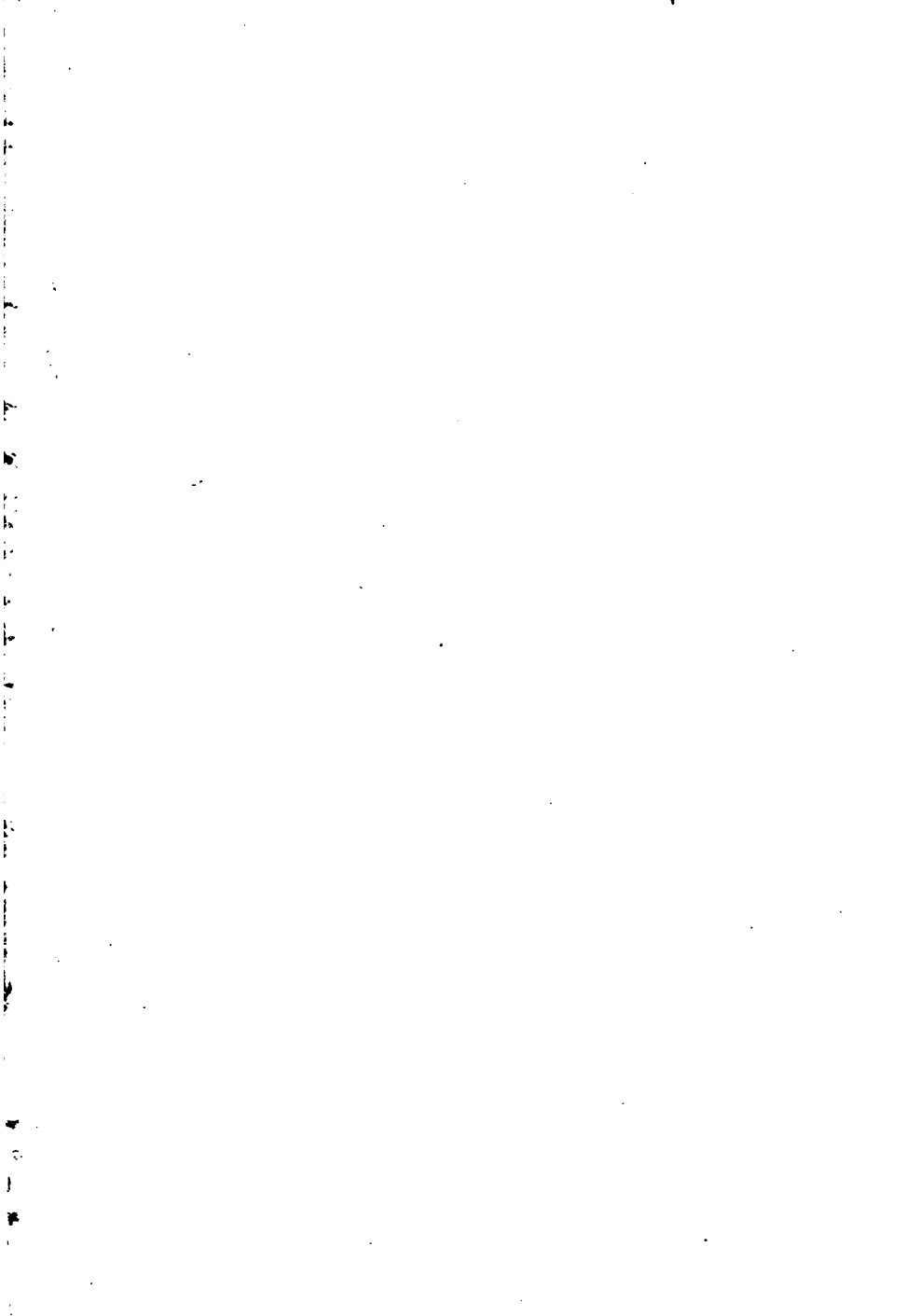
## W

Waldstein, C. ....	88N
Watt, H. J. ....	224-225
Weld, H. P. ....	231-232
Winchester .....	188-189
Witmer .....	156-157
Whistler .....	42, 151
Woodberry .....	189
Words .....	186, 192-193, 198-204, 217, 218
Wordsworth .....	205









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